# MOTIVATING AND ENGAGING THE MUSIC LEARNER IN JAZZ

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Date 13 February 2019

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education at
Teachers College, Columbia University

2019

# ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the motivating and engaging factors of jazz programs present in the learning environments of avocational jazz musicians in higher education. The investigation explored these factors as perceived by the learners themselves as well as the educators tasked with creating enriching musical experiences for their college students. The student participants for this study consisted of college students currently enrolled at a liberal arts college in the Northeast, all of whom perform in the jazz ensemble at their institution. The setting of liberal arts colleges was chosen for the study as an environment where students are actively learning and performing jazz music while pursuing other academic interests more closely related of their desired future professional goals. The educator participants came from the same institutions and provided data in specific regard to their experiences working with this unique population of jazz learners. Students reported their motivations were peaked by the social element inherent to the ensemble experience, their desire to exercise their creativity, and the value of diverse learning environment as part of their overall college experience. On the other hand, educators from the same institutions found that they were best serving their students by demonstrating their own enthusiasm for the music, demonstrating the critical thinking

element of jazz learning, and understanding that the students more closely relate the ensemble to a recreational activity available at the college.

The study gathered data from focus group interviews with 49 students and 6 one-on-one interviews with jazz educators at liberal arts colleges. The questions for these interviews and focus groups were derived from an earlier pilot study of the same population of jazz learners and liberal arts music educators, and the analysis paralleled reported findings to relevant motivational theories and pedagogical practices common to jazz performance education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been grateful for the many educators in my life that have had a profound effect my personal life and that of the professional I have sought to create as a musician and educator. The guidance of these teachers continues to inform me on a daily basis and I feel fortunate to be actively finding ways to pass on their wonderful insights, artistic creations, and legacies to all the students I encounter.

Dr. Abeles, I am lucky to have worked with you throughout my time at Teachers College and could not have asked for a more wonderful sponsor. As doctoral students encountering the ever-delicate and, at times, confusing world of academia, I was frequently comforted with your strategic and insightful way forward that always produced better and clearer results than I ever anticipated. I hope one day I will have acquired your unique get-to-the-chase approach that has benefitted so many students at every level.

Dr. Parkes, thank you for steering me in the right direction in meetings, classes, and seminars that undoubtedly made this study possible. In a daunting process of developing the foundation for a research project, you provided an abundance of resources and strategies that led me to complete a study I hope will inform my practices as an educator for years to come.

Dr. Goffi-Fynn, as the professor of my first course at Teachers College and overall support system for all things TC, I am eternally grateful for your help at every step of the way. I knew at any moment I could ask the most bizarre question and you would immediately have an answer for it. I could not have developed this study, or any others, without your keen insight from working with so many different students. I

thoroughly enjoyed speaking with you about all things professional, academic, and how to construct a life in music education that is endlessly fulfilling.

Dr. Custodero, I will not forget meeting you for the first time at Jazz at Lincoln Center and how generous you were years later in encouraging me to attend Teachers College and your invaluable support in every capacity, at any moment, and in any sense of what it means to be an advocate for another. I knew entering your office would result in a joyful, meaningful, and encouraging conversation and I am forever grateful for your generosity.

I am thankful to my family who made it possible to pursue music after getting me my first guitar at nine years old. I never knew what I was doing, still don't really, but the pursuit of music has shaped my life in every way and I will be forever grateful to the unconditional love and support they gave me to make such a journey.

M.G.B.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

# Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

The college jazz ensemble can be a highly social community that provides a joyful, alternative experience to a traditional music or concert band program for college students. Many colleges, universities, and conservatories offer advanced training programs for pre-professional musicians in a variety of traditional areas – for instance, Composition, Collaborative Piano, Orchestral Conducting, and Strings. These areas have long been established in higher education with a track record of producing outstanding professional musicians for generations. In the late 1940s, and not long after the musical genre came into existence, jazz began to enter this world of higher education with similar aims of producing talented musicians paralleling previous successes in traditional areas. The University of North Texas (then North Texas State Teachers College) offered the first bachelors degree in, "dance band" in 1947 (Joyner, 1997). Since that time jazz has benefited from a range of developing pedagogies to train students in a growing world of professional musicianship throughout higher education.

The world of music professions is changing, and students approach the study of music with a wide variety of ambitions. There are those students who will develop a deep

sense of motivation to develop their skills and find a career path in music that matches their identity. On the other hand, there are students who participate in music throughout primary, secondary, and even post-secondary school, who thoroughly enjoy music but hold no professional ambitions. As musicians we all can relate to the time invested in learning our instruments, the joys of playing music, and the connection that this involvement has on our lives. When students decide that their commitment to music is not connected to their professional goals, many may look for ways to continue learning and participating without abandoning it entirely – and pedagogies are adapting to meet the wider range of expectations of instructors and students.

Jazz music has had a comparatively smaller role in higher education in the past half century, and collegiate jazz education has reflected this. However, one element that has remained dominant since the introduction of jazz to higher education is that performer development is prioritized and students entering collegiate programs are expected to bring with them a deep sense of professional ambition and motivation to improve their skills in a rigorous, performance-oriented program. Among the many elements of jazz that prove challenging to conform to any preexisting model of traditional music education is the inherent social element of the music that is crucial to the learning experience for jazz. It could be within this social context that jazz is attractive to a variety of music students, including non-jazz musicians, and particularly students who have no ambitions of becoming professional jazz musicians in the future. As jazz pedagogy has developed to produce high level and employable musicians in a changing professional world, little focus has been given to the avocational jazz learner. An avocational learner is likely to need a different type of attention than that which is directed towards a pre-

professional student. This study will explore what those needs are from the perspective of students and teachers experiencing jazz in liberal arts colleges.

**Narrative**

Before I ever considered a career in jazz I simply loved listening to the music growing up in northern Arizona. The first time I heard Joe Pass's 1973 solo guitar version "How High the Moon" on his incredible album *Virtuoso,* along with my guitar teacher playing for me Wes Montgomery's album *Far Wes*, I knew I was hooked on the sound of jazz. I knew nothing about the history, culture, or development of jazz, and certainly nothing to the effect of making it into a future career. I found profound enjoyment hearing the adventurous sounds and creativity emanating from these jazz albums paired with an uplifting spirit the music conveyed.

I endeavored to learn more about the music, which meant developing my abilities on the instrument along with absorbing as much information as possible about the history of the music that made it come to life. The musical surroundings of northern Arizona are not exactly rich with a vibrant jazz community, and students in my high school had a scope of live jazz found almost exclusively in the school's jazz band – in a sense a concert band with a drum set and electric bass. I enjoyed playing in the jazz band at school but found myself eager to explore the music beyond the school setting on my own time and actively pursue these deepening interests. I was lucky in the sense that a few students my age also held a strong love of the music and shared my ambition to improve – one of these friends went onto become a professional jazz musician, while the other four friends remain jazz aficionados to this day.

I moved to New York City in 2004 to study jazz performance and music education with the intention of becoming a full-time jazz performer and educator. I knew that I wanted to blend both of these aspects in my future professional life and raise my level of understanding for each independently. During my initial years of college, I heard many musicians and teachers referring to the styles of teaching Western Classical music versus jazz. But from my experiences in college there was little difference to the format in which I was learning both. The class structures were very similar to the traditional pedagogy of classical music; we all sat in a classroom and watched the teacher discuss theory as we took notes. Often times the classes were a mix of jazz and classical students.

It seemed relatively fine to me that jazz was following a similar format to the Western Classical tradition of teaching music as it had certainly been proven to be effective for other musicians. Although, I admit there were many times when I was sitting in classes listening to jazz improvisation concepts when I preferred to be actively engaged in trying to play it on my instrument. I began to wonder if jazz was better learned through more active engagement with the music on my instrument and with my peers in the jazz program. At the time, as someone with ambition to be well versed in many modes of playing jazz, I began to question if my learning experiences would be enhanced with a mode of instruction atypical to the traditional style of music learning in higher education. I was not, however, forming a position at the time of what that curricular structure would be for an aspiring jazz musician other than wonderment if jazz education should be designed in the way classical musicians receive their musical education.

It was not until after college and graduate school (for jazz performance) that I began to think that the formal mode of jazz education I went through might not be the most appropriate, given the history and traditions of the music. To be sure, I absolutely felt I gained from the training I received in college, however, I began to think differently about how I might approach being a jazz educator moving forward. After spending time with older jazz musicians and hearing their experiences of learning jazz I wondered how a formal model of jazz education could look that would maintain those fundamental qualities. As an educator I want to ensure that my students are entering an enriching environment and walking away with a greater understanding of the material and how it has influence on their lives, both musically and otherwise. As a jazz musician I want to equally ensure that I am continuing the traditions of the music as I develop as a player, which consequently will equally affect my role as an educator. The greater question for me now is how I can be effective in both areas respectfully and pass this understanding on to my students, many of whom purport no desire to pursue a career in jazz.

I began teaching at Fordham University in 2010 and since that time have been developing a small jazz program at the liberal arts institution. My initial role was teaching guitar students within the music department, which was a department that had no formal program for performance. Music majors at Fordham earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in music that is not focused on performance, as students "majoring in music with a career intention in another discipline or profession" (National Association of Schools of Music, 2007). A common element to studying music in a liberal arts college is to have more academic emphasis given to history, theory, and composition (National Association of Schools of Music, 2017). While I was working with this population of students it

became clear they were frustrated that no performance opportunities existed at the school and were eager to play in some kind of ensembles. In the spring of 2012 I offered students an opportunity to form jazz ensembles one night per week and placed flyers around campus for any interested students to come, which beyond the students I was teaching in the private lesson program I had no idea who would show up. The first semester 26 students came every week and we formed three separate small jazz groups and performed a concert on campus at the end of the semester. The students loved the experience and I was happy to know that many students participated who were not music majors or minors; they simply shared a love of playing jazz. Since that time we have grown to five small jazz ensembles, one jazz orchestra, and two jazz guitar ensembles every semester as the program has been absorbed into the department and awards the students credit for participating regardless of their declared academic major. Small ensembles meet once a week for one hour, and the jazz orchestra meets once a week for two hours.

The liberal arts environment presented me with a new demographic of jazz students – the avocational jazz learner. Nearly all the students who enroll in the jazz program at Fordham are majors in other fields and even those who are declared music majors do not have professional performance ambitions. I am tasked with creating an enriching musical environment that conveys the fundamentals of jazz on a weekly basis to a group of students who are not motivated by advanced training. These students enjoy being associated with like-minded peers who also enjoy jazz and are curious about it enough to commit to attending ensemble rehearsals every week. But these students do not take on the pressure of practicing immense hours as a pre-professional performance

student in a conservatory might be expected to do. I have found that students in this liberal arts college are attracted to other elements of the music and program rather than focused training common to pre-professional performers. As I investigate teaching methods appropriate for this environment I have discovered there is little research dedicated to understanding this population of jazz learners, especially in higher education. As an educator in this field understanding and adapting to the specific needs of these students will allow me to create the most stimulating and rewarding environment possible.

Questions surrounding motivation come to mind as I prepare rehearsals and overall program structure. What is motivating these students to attend every week? What is motivating them to practice at home and come to rehearsals prepared? Why do they like coming to jazz ensemble? How can we create a successful program that meets the institution's criteria for a successful program while maintaining the quality of the music that is required? What is the community aspect to jazz education? What is the value of creating a *community* as a necessary component of a jazz program? Does the creation of this community alter the goals of the program? Do the expectations of the program change with weight given to this community aspect? How are outcomes evaluated? If instilling a sense of jazz community within a group of young jazz students is a necessary component of the program how is success evaluated? Do performance outcomes matter? How then is success qualified if performance outcomes are not evaluated for each participating student?

As educators we understand that each student will learn differently and at different paces than their peers. As part of creating a jazz community for learning, how is

the environment conducive to accommodate those varying degrees of motivation found in our students? This community is a way of enriching their lives through jazz music, and as a musician and educator I want to honor both avenues by ensuring the traditions of the music are maintained while creating a fulfilling education experience for everyone involved.

**Problem Statement**

While jazz ensembles are common in colleges, non-major programs dedicated to jazz performance are relatively fewer and serve a unique group of students. Most collegiate jazz programs share the focus of training pre-professional jazz musicians, students who represent a group of students dedicated to high level practices preparing for careers as performers. Therefore, the removal from any typical pre-professional setting allows for an alternative to traditional performance programs, the most significant departure being the fact that students in non-major programs participate for a different set of motivations; they are not endeavoring to become professional musicians. This extra, and alternative, interest in the music allows a jazz educator a special opportunity to instill in the students a deeper understanding of the music outside the scope of a more traditional pre-professional format. The unique nature of this environment requires the development of a jazz community to ensure a successful experience for the students in all levels. In the research about jazz education and pedagogies there is little focus on the avocational jazz learner, particularly as they relate to non-major programs in higher education.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine aspects of a jazz performance program in the liberal arts environment, and jazz music in general, that are most engaging for students to continue participation in college as non-performance majors. This study investigated how jazz programs at select liberal arts colleges may promote the aspect of community in the program as a necessary component to effectively learning the music. Students and teachers were interviewed to gauge their sense of motivation and engagement to the process of learning jazz in this unique environment. This study aims to better understand the needs and motivations of jazz students participating in jazz programs that are not based in professional training outcomes.

## Background and Rationale

Jazz has been entering and growing within formal higher education as early as 1947 when North Texas State Teacher College offer a concentration in, "dance band" (Joyner, 1997). Carter (1986) has shown that by, "the '75-'76 school year more than 500,000 students were involved in some form of jazz-related school activity supervised by a *jazz educator*" (p. 49). That growth has taken place in the 30 years since jazz formally entered higher education, which was in turn 30 years after the first jazz recordings in 1917. Given this rapid growth into the realm of music education, current students participating in jazz programs at all levels (primary, secondary, and post-secondary) has grown exponentially. However, the primary focus of this growth has been to develop the next generation of performers with assumptions that that those students are endeavoring to perform at a high level and each step of their education is a step in that

direction. Williams and Richards (1988) argue that, “jazz education should be using the great works of the past to help train the music’s future performers” (p. 1).

The increase in available jazz performer programs has contributed to methods perpetuating the art form at the highest level. A changing world of music education means students of all levels are introduced to the music and find different levels of value associated with their participation. As educators it is necessary that we adapt to these changing needs of the student body and approach pedagogy with an alternative set of expectations and methods to address these needs. Available jazz pedagogies have not addressed the avocational learner of jazz. There is significant value in the experience for anyone with a passion for the music, and this perspective requires educators to develop new methods to ensure students thrive in an enriching and educational experience which may offer benefits to a broader range of students and their goals.

This study attempts to address issues associated with this population of learners by identifying their specific needs, beginning with factors of motivation and engagement. Understanding these elements will aid the educator in better providing the optimal experience for all participants.

**Research Questions**

1. How are students motivated to learn and develop skills in a jazz program as non pre-professional music students?
2. What expectations do students have for a non-major jazz programs offered at their liberal arts college?

3. How can educators in this environment motivate and engage jazz learners with perceived atypical performance outcomes and expectations? What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community?

## Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted utilizing a framework that combines theories of motivation – Expectancy Value Framework – along with that of jazz performer development. The expectancy-value theory will provide a basic framework for why a person cares about an activity to consider it important and that it has value (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Considering against the profile of the jazz student in the phenomenon under investigation, one important assumption is that students in these environments are likely continuing to learn jazz for other reasons and motivations other than potential future career objectives related specifically to jazz performance. Outlining that investigation with the lens of expectancy value, and corresponding subsets of this theory, will aid in the explanation of how a student's, "choice, persistence, and performance" can be explained by their beliefs and values of the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In this case of avocational jazz students, the study aimed to uncover an explanation as to why a student values the activity enough to continue active involvement removed from a curricular expectation of making jazz their future profession. As it relates to learning music, this theory tells us what a person expects in terms of success and the values of the tasks. A corresponding theory that helps to frame this study is that of Music Participation Theory (Gates, 1991). Participation has been broadened to include a wide range of groups, including the audience, musicians, and even instrument builders. However, a

participation theory of this kind can limit that scope to participants who exhibit a pattern of behavior, "of which is to take some part in the production of some class of material and/or psychological objects, in this case, music" (p. 4). These participatory and motivational theories will be combined with that of jazz performer pedagogy in an ensemble setting in terms of how the music has been taught, primarily within the realm of higher education. The overlap of pedagogical approaches and that of motivational theories will help shape the study and interpret the collected data.

## Plan of Research

The study was conducted in selected liberal arts colleges in the Northeastern United States. After identifying potential colleges (criteria for selection outlined in Chapter III), the researcher visited each school to conduct an interview with the primary jazz teacher and hold a small focus group of students from the same program. It is from these dialogues that the researcher interpreted the data to gather what factors the teachers and students find most engaging and motivating to participate once in the program.

## Research Methodology Overview

This study used a qualitative design to gather data in two parts; faculty interviews and student focus groups at selected liberal arts colleges. The interviews with faculty were intended to learn about the perspective of an educator working in this environment for several years who can articulate observations of best practices motivating and engaging the avocational learners in their programs. In researching potential liberal arts colleges as case studies for this study, jazz faculty members represent a wide variety of

duties at their respective institutions; improvisation class, jazz orchestra, small ensemble, private lessons, among other jazz related responsibilities. It was my hope that these varying experiences and points of interaction with their students will provide an array of experiences to describe observations related to my research questions for this population of students. On the other hand, the use of small student focus groups at the same institutions were intended to create an open dialogue among the students with the aim of learning how they are motivated to learn in the jazz program, how they prioritize the jazz ensembles within their college lives, and how the experiences will influence future decisions and involvement with jazz opportunities.

**Assumptions**

The study operated under a few assumptions about the participants who took part in the study, regarding both the teacher and the students. First, students enrolled in these jazz programs came to the college to focus on other academic fields as their primary major and that their future goals are not to become professional musicians. The second assumption about the students is that they were involved in jazz to some extent prior to entering college. This assumption tells me that jazz is important to them and they are keeping it active in their lives as they pursue other interests. There is one guiding assumption regarding the teachers in this environment; the teacher is a jazz performer at an advanced level and performs frequently outside of the school in a professional capacity.

**Researcher Perspective**

The scope of this study was inspired by my current work as a jazz teacher at a liberal arts college in New York, along with being a teacher and program director for Youth Programs at Jazz at Lincoln Center. I am currently engaged in several professional performances and wanted to design a study that will help other educators working with this unique population of jazz students – avocational jazz learners. While I am currently working in a liberal arts college, my students and colleagues at that institution will not act as participants in this study, although it is my hope that what I learn from this research will inform how I teach and develop an appropriate program in my current professional capacities.

# Chapter II

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Introduction

Jazz is a comparatively young form of music and the practice of delivering knowledge to successive generations is in continual development. There are, to be sure, areas within the institutionalized form of jazz education that have been shown among musicians and educators to be effective in passing along the traditions of the music. The focus of this study is to understand what motivates avocational jazz students to continue learning in a structured college jazz program, particularly liberal arts colleges, when their main academic focus is not music, and how this motivation is due to the organic and healthy aspects of jazz culture to the degree it is accessible to all students.

There is a wealth of information about jazz and various pedagogical methods of teaching the music. However, much of this material is dedicated to the support of advanced musical training, in which students are studying jazz due to their strong motivation to become better – and possibly professional – musicians. These students have set their expectations of what music they will learn and how they will learn it. There may not be a typical mode of instruction, but the various methods hold similar components and follow expected outcomes at their respective levels, whether that be a middle school band student or a college major in jazz performance. While students can be trained to

perform at a high level, it is understood among educators that not all music students will become professionals, or even pursue music as a major in college. Many students will maintain their desire to stay active with jazz in college while pursuing other fields. There is little research to support a pedagogy for students in this category. Thus, it is important to better understand their needs, motivations, and goals while continuing to study in structured jazz programs at their college.

It is common for universities to offer some courses in jazz studies. These courses could be about history, improvisation, theory, composition, or literature, among other jazz-related topics. Many colleges award bachelor's degrees in jazz, some offer a master's degree, and there are a few that offer a doctoral program in jazz studies. However, these rigorous programs may not allow non-performance music majors the opportunity to participate in jazz programs if their declared major is in another field. Some universities offer recreational ensembles for non-major students to participate in. This study will focus on understanding the motivation for students to continue studying in jazz programs during their college years when their goals are not to become professional musicians. What elements of jazz are appealing to such students that would encourage their continued participation? What elements of a small jazz program in a school can adequately support this unique set of motivations and goals? How should students be assessed if professional-level performance outcomes are not part of the motivation to participate?

This review of literature will offer a framework to understand some motivational constructs that would help avocational jazz learners in non pre-professional college programs. Theories of motivation are well researched, but the focus here examines areas

of motivation most applicable to college music students, particularly those students in non-major music programs. The review of literature has found a shortage of thorough work in the areas of motivation and engagement in non pre-professional students in higher education. Therefore, parallels will be drawn between motivation theories for all learners and post-secondary jazz pedagogies.

**Jazz Education Agenda**

This literature review will examine where jazz education has already developed tools for understanding and advancing the music for active performers. Substantial work within jazz education has been devoted to understanding the music with the goal of better training musicians. As a useful starting point, we can draw helpful lessons from extant jazz pedagogies, and from there begin to unveil how these might be applied to a broader demographic of jazz learners. As pedagogies develop, goals have shifted to include elements of jazz in other areas of general music education – general music students will benefit from an understanding of jazz music whether or not they choose to become advanced players of jazz (Winking, 1996).

The focus of understanding the motivational aspects of jazz pedagogy has paralleled that of general music in how teachers might understand attitudes of their students and best serve those needs more directly. While more dedicated work is needed on the motivation and engagement constructs of avocational jazz students, existing work in surrounding areas will frame the reviewed literature in jazz education. The goals and practices of training advanced jazz players could be beneficial to avocational learners as well, albeit with different expectations for the outcomes. Throughout this literature

review we will see how improved pedagogies for jazz performer education could engage the avocational learner with core jazz properties. Moreover, understanding the motivational constructs of young musicians will guide the work of understanding what motivates avocational learners to remain engaged with jazz music as college students.

**Performer development**. The first and clear goal for traditional jazz education has been to develop the next generation of jazz performers with robust training to meet the needs of a modern professional musician. Martin Williams, an early proponent of jazz education in post-secondary settings, presented a model of jazz education barely distinguishable from a classically-oriented model of music education. He writes, "jazz education should be using the great works of the past to help train the music's future performers" (1988, p. 1). As the music has grown in popularity and entered academia, performers and educators alike have endeavored to identify the best practices for training students as potentially professional musicians. The view among educators for studying jazz in a formal setting has to parallel standardized western classical music training: "Jazz students should have the same kind of knowledge of musical tradition of richness that classical players do" (Williams & Richards, 1988, p. 2). There are those who believe, such as Dobbins, that proper jazz education should follow the same inspiration that brought jazz to life. "Creative curiosity is probably one of the main factors which led to the development of the earliest jazz" (1988, p. 31). However, creative curiosity is not exclusive to training professional musicians; those who enjoy music as an avocation can share the same level of curiosity while maintaining different expectations for acquiring the skills and knowledge of jazz.

The direct study of jazz develops one as a jazz musician in addition to providing a clear application of learned theoretical concepts found in traditional music education courses at an advanced level. Dobbins writes, “The sharpening of rhythmic skills, experience and training in jazz, more than any other music, offers a practical application of all the basic skills and technics studied in traditional music theory and harmony courses” (p. 32). The intense study of jazz allows for practical and in-the-moment application of theoretical tools learned in traditional music settings and allows for the forward momentum of the music as an active and living musical genre. Dobbins would add that jazz has, in a sense, provided an avenue for the continuation of “musical vocabularies and dialects” from European music from 1650 to 1950 that could have otherwise faded (p. 32).

**Avocational learners**. While some strong supporters of jazz education believe in the development of future jazz musicians, there are those who consider studying jazz relevant to avocational jazz musicians. Goals for better training musicians are equally useful in educating the non-professional community of musicians, and music enthusiasts. There are elements of jazz that enrich everyday life, which comes from understanding the culture and history of the music, and an avocational musician can be equipped with the ability to integrate activities into other areas than jazz music directly (Dobbins, 1988, p. 31). There are qualities to jazz that are beneficial to all levels of music students, and those have to do with the cultural relevance and history surrounding the development of the music.

**Rationale for Jazz Education**

As the push for jazz integration in the music curriculum has progressed, jazz educators have coupled the rationales for more jazz in the curriculum by pairing jazz elements to that of core arts standards. There are a number of components directly applicable to the national standards, and there are accompanying arguments as to why jazz meets those standards in the general education area. Beyond the scope of jazz music, there are few opportunities to apply creatively the musical skills outlined in associated musical arts standards, which places jazz in a unique position to provide that creative outlet for transformative learning. The earliest forms of jazz education were focused on directed listening by the student, whether this be at live performances or from jazz recordings, the first of which were made in 1917 by the *Original Dixieland 'Jass' Band*, only later to include in any institutional way the practice of learning essential jazz fundamentals. "The practical implementation of jazz improvisation as part of the standard music education curriculum involves students transcribing recorded improvised solos by themselves" (p. 34). Paired with an education not based in the practice of skills, knowing the history of jazz benefits music and non-music students alike, "it is important to study jazz because it represents our own culture" (p. 35).

The goal for including jazz in a music curriculum is to raise the stature of the music through informing the general public, training musicians, and completing a well-rounded music education. To this end the International Association of Jazz Educators along with the National Association for Music Education produced a guide booklet titled *Teaching Jazz: A Course of Study* to lay out their rationale for jazz education inclusion and areas of focus for all types of educators – general music through advanced jazz

musicians teaching future jazz musicians. The scope of this text is to align jazz education to be taught as "aesthetic education" (IAJE, 1996). This text supports the development of music educators with information about how to include jazz in general music along with pairing aspects of jazz to that of national core arts standards. A basic grasp of jazz – whether it is the active practice of the music or the cultural influences derived from its rich history – helps students gain a special aesthetic and cultural sensibility that might not be accessed in other areas of their academic lives. The National Association for Music Education outlines key areas of content standards that can connect jazz with a general music curriculum and national standards.

> It is critical that jazz education have a clear and precise philosophy based upon the aesthetic values of jazz. The aim of jazz education should be to develop in students a sensitivity to the expressive qualities of jazz and to provide opportunities for musical growth through creating, performing, and perceiving jazz. To this end jazz education must be consciously aware of the depth of human understanding available to students through jazz education as aesthetic education. (Garcia, 1996, pg. 24-25).

Many of the explanations given to warrant the study of jazz is applicable to the study of music in a general setting. A few studies link the national content standards for the arts to areas learned in jazz, particularly in key areas of creating, performing, and responding (NAFME, 2014).

**Technical Consideration in the Learning of Jazz**

While the national standards articulated by NAFME are created to guide curricula for general music education, the standards outlined by the organization provide a unique parallel to learning jazz. Jazz has a fundamental spontaneity that will speak to elements of these standards, and the history of the music speaks to the cultural influences that

make the genre continually relevant and an avenue for students to form their own opinions of how those influences can be expressed.

The concept of, "creating" is prevalent throughout nearly every level of jazz performance, and this is exemplified in the practice of improvisation. In the set of preferred outcomes identified by the National Association for Music Education in their 2014 *Music Standards*, they state that performers will be able to, "compose and improvise melodic and rhythmic ideas or motives" (2014). Furthermore, this core skill is connected a body of complementary knowledge of music. As Engelke argues, "to compose and arrange [jazz] music, students must have a firm knowledge of music theory" (1996, p. 33). In fact, jazz challenges its practitioners perhaps more thoroughly and regularly to constantly bring together various domains of knowledge and proficiency. Bill Dobbins writes that, "jazz, more than any other music, offers a practical application of all the basic skills and technics studied in traditional music theory and harmony courses" (1988, p. 35). In contrast, in a traditional concert band setting, students have limited opportunities to improvise melodies, and not every instrument is afforded that opportunity. In a jazz band, however, there are ample opportunities for all instruments to improvise melodies.

The area of "performing" includes *selecting, analyzing,* and *interpreting* the music. While general music students meet these requirements, there are areas within jazz specifically that can enhance the specified standards. "In classical music the goal is to create the best results with the rehearsed notes—unlike jazz, where the performer has to be ready for anything, not knowing what is going to be played. The use of jazz assures that students are taught to think in more than one way" (Engelke, 1996, p. 34).

A musician could likely connect the notion of "responding" to various layers of music performance – the national standards discussed here add a dimension of social relevancy to the practice of "responding." In the rationale put forward by IAJE and MENC, there are 12 points supporting the inclusion of jazz education in a curriculum, three of which apply directly to this standard, 1) Jazz is highly relevant to the musical dialect of the 20th century, 2) It is an American musical art form, and 3) It is an integral part of music education and American culture (IAJE, 1996). Students and teachers can draw many connections between the music played and that of important historical and cultural developments in American society. "It is important to study jazz because it represents our own culture" (Engelke, 1996, p. 35).

The study of jazz adds an enjoyable and social element to music education that many music students could find appealing. "The music has always been desirable to the students because it is fun and possibly the single area in music education capable of real emotional expression." (Bash, 1981, p. 73). Winking affirms that, "jazz must be in a well-rounded music curriculum" (1996, p. 39). Reverend Wiskerchen found universal elements that would be useful to all music students. "The main thrust remained the development of a personal creativity and expressive voice for the student – and creating a place where the student could practice and exercise that creativity" (Winking, 1996, p. 38).

**Brief History of Jazz Education**

The history of jazz is relatively young, as is the practice of teaching the music, and more explicitly connected to challenging social and political issues: "As a cultural

and historical art form, jazz is a deeply social music, linked to the everyday world and, in many cases, born out of a hotbed of oppression, politics and the entertainment industry" (Whyton, 2006, p. 70). The notion that jazz music is social has pitted the teaching of jazz against long standing traditions of music education. Absent the traditional school model of teaching jazz, interested students had to seek out alternative sources of instruction, primarily from well-known professionals who agreed to teach young musicians. This approach did not follow a standard protocol of instruction and was based on an oral tradition as opposed to a written curriculum more common in music classrooms. In order to learn the music, aspiring students had to listen to the music in-depth, and they were introduced to a methodology of acute listening and well-monitored modelling, one that was propelled by early 20th-century recording technology: "the beginning of recording in 1917 can be seen as the greatest boom to jazz pedagogy… records made it possible for students in any area to study, emulate, re-create and further develop the style" (Carter, 1986, p. 11). In fact, as Henry has pointed out, recording technology was the primary medium by which a musical legacy was archived: "For students of jazz, sound recordings were the 'scores' of jazz, the same way written music preserves European classical music" (1985, p. 53). In other words, jazz has maintained a tradition of learning the music aurally from previous generations, or recordings, as opposed to predominantly reading written scores.

**Jazz traditions**. The first group of musicians to serve as role models to aspiring musicians were Buddy Bolden, "Jelly Roll," and Buck Johnson. These New Orleans figures were heard by Louis Armstrong and Kid Ory (Carter, 1986, p. 10). This explains the crucial role of mentorship in the history of jazz, and there is evidence that early jazz

musicians were quite conscious of their roles as bearers of musical evolution. For instance, as Carter explains, “Joe Oliver is known to have given instruction in the correct performance of his ‘new’ style” (1986, p. 10). From its earliest days, jazz was developing an aural/oral tradition, one that in turn was rooted in African cultural practices:

> Music pedagogy was not a new phenomenon for these black artists; it was a part of the African continuum. Examples of which can be seen in the passing down of songs and instruments during slavery; the oral traditions of blues development and the cutting contests of rag-time, barrel-house stride and jib pianist. (Carter, 1986, p. 10)

Near the turn of the century other musicians, such as William Handy, James Reese Europe and Len Bowden, were attempting to establish organized instruction of the music: “By 1907 Handy was well established in Memphis as a performer, composer and teacher of the new style (Blues)” (Carter, 1986, p. 10). Leon Bowden’s efforts progressed a step further by providing instruction as a student teacher at Tuskagee Institute and organizing the school’s first “Syncopated Band” (p. 10). This institutionalized initiative progressed through Bowden’s work in training 5,000 men as music director at the Great Lakes Navy Base from 1942 to 1945; all 5,000 men were expected to function as “jazz (dance), as well as military band musicians” (p. 11).

The organically occurring pedagogies of jazz were geographically widespread and served to bridge genres and communities of musicians. As jazz, or dance band music, was increasing in popularity the 1930s, private studios began to emerge in major cities like Chicago, New York, Boston, Denver, and Los Angeles with purpose of teaching jazz improvisation (Carter, 1986, p. 11). Classically trained musicians in these cities were offering technical training to aspiring jazz musicians in exchange for “jazz related instruction” (p. 12).

**Secondary education**. As the enthusiasm for jazz education was growing, the formats offering instruction were also developing in many capacities and levels. Connections between secondary and higher education became stronger as students and communities were eager to learn more about the music. The Lenox School of Jazz established in 1957 was among the first efforts to bring jazz students in direct contact with jazz performers in an institutional educational setting (Carter, 1986). This school and the summer seminars initiated by Marshall Stearns led to the formation of the Stan Kenton camps in 1960, with 260 students in attendance at the first camp session (Joyner, 1997). The growth of jazz in school settings continued through the 1960s with roughly 5,000 high schools and 40 colleges offering more jazz related courses than at the beginning of the decade (Carter, p. 13). By the end of the 1960s the numbers had increased to over 10,000 high schools and 300 colleges offering jazz-related courses. Of the 300 colleges offering jazz courses, 135 offered these courses for credit (p. 13). In 1968 the National Association of Jazz Educators was formed by John Roberts, Matt Betton, Clem DeRosa, Dr. M.E. Gene Hall (North Texas State), William Lee, and Jack Wheaton (Bash, 1995). This organization marked a major push to include jazz as part of national music curriculum attention and came after famed band leader Stan Kenton spoke at the 1967 Tanglewood Symposium (Bash, 1995). The NAJE was formed at the MENC Convention in Seattle and so that, "jazz in education could be considered a recognized discipline" (Henry, 1985, p. 22). Thus, by the 1970s there had been significant strides in the inclusion of jazz at secondary and higher education levels.

Reverend George Wiskerchen was a key figure in the history of jazz education and was among the first educators to insist on the inclusion of jazz bands on college

campuses. He was not a jazz musician himself but recognized the inherent value to students studying the art form and becoming better overall musicians for it. There are many notable alumni who credit Reverend Wiskerchen for pushing them towards a career in jazz; however, he insisted on creating an enriching experience for all his students whatever their future career goals with music, if they had any at all:

> When I first started teaching, and even today, my basic educational goal was to develop, push, and guide the minds of entire beings of my students so that they might live as good and full a life as possible, a life enriched in all possible ways. (Winking, 1996, p. 37)

Reverend Wiskerchen's role was to be an advocate for the recognition and study of the music in the college setting. He began his work of building jazz programs in 1956 with Notre Dame High School in Illinois and brought his commitment to the college setting at University of Notre Dame beginning in 1972 (Winking, 1996).

**Higher education.** The 1974 *Downbeat* survey, "Jazz on the College Campus," showed that of the 248 institutions surveyed, 228 offered jazz performance instruction for credit (Carter, 1986, p. 49). There were 440 other schools offering jazz courses. Most of these schools offer jazz as a general elective; however, 11% offer jazz as a minor and 8% require all music majors to take at least one jazz-related course (p. 49).

There have been many obstacles to introducing jazz in higher education, both within the realm of training musicians and that of educating the general population about the historical and societal role of the music. The goals of developing jazz training programs provide the clearest look into aspects of jazz education that have remained active since the training of jazz began in the early 1940s. There is a place within the university community for the deep study of jazz regardless of the end goals, one that actually resonates with classical ideals of education: "The original function of the

university was primarily that of a center for learning and research, not a stepping stone to a commercially lucrative career" (Dobbins, 1988, p. 38). However, there has been increasing pressure on universities to produce employable graduates with skills learned during their college years. That pressure could be amplified in music schools when post-college jobs are scarcer, creating an unclear reflection of the college program students graduated from. "Also in our consideration is supply and demand of students in an increasingly more job-oriented educational market" (Brown, 1981, p. 12). Jazz education will need to give equal focus to students who are studying the music while not endeavoring to becoming full-time musicians upon graduation. An education in jazz, whether performance based or survey based, will enrich the education of a student focusing on music – not contingent on the career they wish to pursue after graduation. "We will need to turn to other means of attracting students than the joys of being a complete musician. The general college student and music minors are the answer to this quest" (Brown, 1981, p. 12). "Recognizing the diversity of today's students and the unsurety of the future, it behooves all professional educators to consider all possibilities for stimulation of students' minds" (p. 12).

The idea of creating established schools for jazz education was becoming more formalized during the 1940s as practitioners and aficionados were pushing the study of the music in universities around the country. By this time there were seven colleges offering jazz studies related courses for college credit and 10 other colleges that offered jazz activities of some kind for no credit (Carter, 1986, p. 12). Probably the most prominent of these universities presenting jazz studies courses was North Texas State Teachers College (now known as University of North Texas), which began offering a

Bachelor of Music degree with an emphasis in “dance band” in 1947 (Joyner, 1997, p. 53). This program was spearheaded by Gene Hall who termed the degree, “dance band work” and he was the first educator to put jazz on a credit basis on a college campus (Feather, 1981, p. 21). This was a good setting for this development. Dating back to the 1920s, “stage bands” and “dance bands” intended to provide wholesome entertainment for students on the North Texas campus (Joyner, 1997, p. 53). Formal jazz education was in a sense launched through the recreational role an ensemble would have in serving the university community. The students enjoyed the presence of jazz, or “dance” or “stage” bands performing so much that eventually students sought training in how to play this new type of popular music. Gene Hall could, “not understand why the college curriculum was designed around training professionals only to play in symphony orchestras, concert bands, and to sing in opera” (p. 53). Hall had begun to formulate a curriculum for jazz by designing training for writing in dance band as early as 1933. In 1942 he began to bring this curriculum to North Texas with a small arranging class to initiate the concept of, “lab band” (Joyner, 1997, pg. 53).

Preceding the formation of a jazz degree at University of North Texas, jazz critic, author, pianist, composer, lecturer, lyricist, disc jockey, TV producer, and talent scout Leonard Feather began giving lectures at the New School for Social Research in 1941 along with collaborator Robert Goffin (Feather, 1981, p. 20). Goffin had written likely the first book about the jazz in 1932 in Belgium, *Aux Frontieres du Jazz* (Feather, 1981, p. 20). Leonard Feather was not training new musicians in this forum, as opposed to the efforts of North Texas State College later in the decade, but rather informing an audience

about jazz and with the origins of music, current trends, and prominent artists. More than 40 years after beginning these classes jazz educator Bill Dobbins wrote,

> The greatest contributions which jazz education could make are the development of a future paying audience for creative music and the development of a musical environment which encourages and facilitates the formation of ongoing musical relationships among our most talented young musicians of all stylistic persuasion. (p. 35)

This tells us that the goals for developing an informed audience have been equaled and paralleled with the goals of creating jazz musicians ever since the concept of jazz education was put into motion. Leonard Feather was able to supplement these sessions with several guest appearances with musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, and Mel Powell (p. 21).

As jazz was slow to enter higher education in the late 1940s, other significant moments added to the support of studying the music. A surge of jazz education in the schools occurred in the post-World War II era (Henry, 1985, p. 22). The GI Bill allowed for returning servicemen after the World War II to complete their educations and many who enjoyed the popularity of jazz music while in the service wanted to receive education in it (Carter, 1986, p. 12). While efforts like the GI Bill helped push jazz towards formal training environments, other efforts to create a structure for jazz education were emerging. The first jazz in the summer seminars began in 1951 by jazz historian, Marshal Stearns (p. 13). Jazz courses continued to grow in the form of non-credit offerings in higher education for stage bands and some courses on improvisation and jazz history (p. 13). The educator would find the best way to work within the jazz medium for a movement that was started by and for the students (Henry, 1985).

## Motivation

There are many studies investigating the motivation involved in a multitude of voluntary activities, including ample research into motivation of music students, and teachers. “Motivation is the driving force behind behavior. It provides the energy for seeking out and being involved in tasks” (Asmus, 1994, p. 6). Unfortunately, many studies are not directed towards the avocational jazz student in higher education. However, as motivational theories have developed in many areas, including music, the literature in this section will draw parallels to adult learners and non-performers of music. The review of these theories will describe what compels a student to continue learning music beyond their high school years and into college. When a student has made the choice not to pursue music as a profession, or as a college major, an understanding of what motivates them to continue active learning is needed. The review of related literature and theories will help assess sets of avocational learner motivations and highlight where specific research is needed in the field. As educators we are constantly seeking to identify and develop strategies for motivating our students. Even when we term a student as, “motivated” we need to know exactly how the student is motivated in order to better serve their needs. A motivated student is someone actively engaged in the learning process (Stipek, 1998). Furthermore, we as teachers can play a significant role in establishing motivation for our students as early as possible, “for music learning appears to increase with the pleasant personality traits of a teacher” (Woody, 2004, p. 18).

**Motivation theories.** When looking at what motivates a college student to engage in musical learning without the pressures of performance outcomes, it is helpful to consider broader theories of what compels a student to play a musical instrument. This

section will highlight four theories of motivation; Expectancy-Value, Self-Efficacy, Flow Theory, and Attribution Theory. These theories help provide explanations and frameworks for understanding why students continue with music in higher education, particularly in a *recreational* capacity.

> Students who are engaged approach challenging tasks eagerly, exert intense effort using active problem-solving strategies, and persist in the face of difficulty. Motivated students focus on developing understanding and mastering skills; they are enthusiastic and optimistic; and they take pleasure in academic tasks and pride in their achievements. (Stipek, 1998, p. 85)

The following section on motivational theories will outline the key areas within the four theories of motivation that are most relevant to avocational jazz learning, that is, with particular focus on expectations for success in Expectancy-Value, the belief in success in Self-Efficacy, the Flow Theory ideal of matching proficiency to perceived challenged Flow Theory, and Attribution Theory's isolation of the perceived causes of success.

**Expectancy-value theory**. An individual's expectancies for success and the value they put upon success are important determinants of their motivation to perform in the theory of expectancy-value (Wigfield, 1994). The expectancy-value theory helps explain why someone cares enough about an activity to consider it an important part of their future (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). "Theorists in this tradition argue that individuals' choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity" (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). This construct of motivation, "posits that expectancies and values influence students' choice, performance, effort, and persistence" (Parkes, 2012, p. 102). These elements will come to define the avocational jazz learner in terms of the student's

choice to join the ensemble, their ability to play music and the effort it takes to have musical skills, and the persistence to practice and attend regular jazz sessions. Within this model there are six areas; expectancy, ability, intrinsic interest, attainment value, social utility (extrinsic) value, and perceived cost (Parkes & Jones, 2012). Attainment value refers to how well a student believes it is important to do well on a task, while the sole enjoyment of playing music is intrinsic motivation (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002).

**Intrinsic motivation**. The area of *intrinsic motivation* might be the theory most pertinent to learning music, particularly for students engaged in music recreationally and not in a professional training capacity. This theory is based on the assumption that humans are naturally motivated to develop their intellectual and other competencies and to take pleasure in their accomplishments (Stipek, 1996). Individuals who have a high intrinsic interest value are more likely to engage in the task, persist longer, and be intrinsically motivated to perform the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). "Many achievement motivation theorists consider intrinsically motivated behavior more desirable than extrinsically motivated behavior. First, intrinsically motivated individuals are not dependent on consequences external to their behavior" (Stipek, 1998, p. 96). Within intrinsic motivation there is the opportunity for the teacher to activate a student's motivational factors through the mode of instruction, and most promising is instruction which allows students a sense of agency: "Students' perceptions of personal causality—their sense that they chose to engage in an activity—and thus their intrinsic motivations are affected by how much control they have over their learning activities" (Stipek, 1998, p. 99). The onus is on the educator now to use activities that create the proper balance between easy, hard, boring, repetitive, or meaningless in order to maintain the ideal

amount of motivation from the students (Stipek, 1998). In the case of music learning, rewarding students for behavior will not have the same positive effect as activating the intrinsic motivations of students.

**Self-determination theory**. Another component of intrinsic motivation is the theory that, "intrinsic motivation is enhanced when an individual feels that he or she is in control of a situation" (Asmus, 1994, p. 12). When a student feels in control of the situation, other positive reactions are produced, such as creativity, cognitive flexibility, and self-esteem (Asmus, 1994). These environments, "provide a greater sense of choice, actions which are self-initiated, and encourage personal responsibility" (Asmus, 1994, p. 12).

Relating the playing of an instrument against its usefulness in future goals is *extrinsic utility value*, and the *perceived cost* is comparing the negative aspects of investing time to practice and participate in musical activities (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). At some point prior to entering college a student has made a conscious decision whether or not to actively pursue or intensely study music after high school. When students enter college they face for the first time the need, and ability, to make decisions on their own behalf that affect their future. Should a student make the decision not to pursue music as their focus in college, and potential career path after college, they may also decide they want to continue growing as musicians while pursuing other goals and interests. A student who has made this decision is likely motivated in a number of ways. A strong academically-minded student might have *attainment value* prevalent as a motivator in other areas of their lives in addition to music. A good comparison is with sports. Many students play sports competitively in high school and a small number of

those students try to make sports a college career. However, many other students participate in intramural sports recreationally throughout college. Students might thoroughly enjoy playing music as much as they enjoy playing sports, which speaks to an *intrinsic motivation*.

The *extrinsic utility value* and *perceived cost* motivation theories provide an alternative to the enjoyment side of motivation. Do some students perform professionally on weekends and evenings not in any way connected to their school activities? Do they see a value to continued participation in music if there is monetary reward for part-time involvement? The stresses of first-year college students are immense and often time students must pit the fun they had playing music in high school against the new academic demands of college and determine if music continues to play a significant role in their life. The overwhelming adjustment to college life and academic studies could mean that the time investment in practicing an instrument and participating in recreational ensembles might be too much.

**Self-efficacy**. The theory of self-efficacy is related to an individual's belief in his or her ability to achieve certain goals (Stipek, 1998). There are studies on how students' beliefs influence their ability to perform well on musical examinations (McPherson & McCormick, 1999). In McPherson and McCormick's study, the students who believed they would do well on the exam performed better than students who had indicated a lower level of self-confidence prior to entering the exam. In the case of students wishing to participate in non-major jazz programs during college, the pressure of performing well on exams is eliminated. But this does not mean that self-efficacy is not prevalent in their desire to do well. Parncutt and McPherson have pointed out that, "valuing a musical

activity may be even more important in sustaining motivation for practice than believing in one's ability to succeed (2002, pg. 32). Students who are not pursuing music degrees will still find value in learning in musical activities when the notion of success is not a factor for participation – students value the process. Parncutt and McPherson explain that,

> young musicians who valued their practice highly did so because it provided them with the opportunity to demonstrate aspects of their competence, which in turn reinforced the value they placed on learning to play an instrument and motivated them to achieve their goals. (2002)

A feeling of success motivates students to continue to practice and remain involved in musical practice. In a jazz program with no expected performance outcomes – there are no applied ability grades – students could remain motivated if they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their progress to their peers, and to themselves.

**Flow theory**. Flow theory suggests that motivation and the state of flow is sparked the perceived challenge of a task is met with a skill high enough to achieve a successful outcome.

Students need to be engaged with musical activities that are appropriately matched to their skill levels. When a student is overwhelmed with the difficulty of music their motivation decreases. Equally, when a musical activity is well below a students' skill level, boredom takes over and motivation is diminished. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of the, "flow state" has been interpreted to mean that,

> optimal experience requires a balance between roughly equal levels of perceived challenge and skill in a situation that involved intense concentration. According to this explanation, activities are seen as pleasurable when the challenge is matched to the person's skill levels. (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002, p. 35)

The concept of flow for jazz students could, as it is described here, be influential in two opposing directions. For students who have gained some experience and confidence

improvising, the challenge of doing so while playing with others has a high potential to produce the flow state. Conversely, for those music students with advanced skills in music other than jazz, the notion of improvisation could prove too intimidating to reach that state of flow. The environment, and instructor, now have a unique opportunity to spark this flow state through the way the jazz sessions are operated. Through acknowledgement of previous skills, and the introduction of repertoire at a skill-appropriate level, students could develop new learning motivations when the flow state is present in the jazz ensemble rehearsal setting.

In a study by Susan O'Neill (1999) accounting for the amount of time spent practicing, surveyed students, "valued the social opportunities afforded by their school to engage in music making with other like-minded peers" (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). Whether a student is a highly skilled in music, or cannot devote as much time as other students to practice, the experience of making music with peers is motivation enough to participate. Jazz is a highly social music and flow theory could help explain why the experience matters more than the outcome for those who participate in college without the pressures of pursuing music or majoring in music.

**Attribution theory**. Motivation can be elicited via the management of expectations; therefore, understanding how students attribute the causes of their successes will aid in identifying motivational structures for music performance students. Bernard Weiner grounded this theory on the reasons students cite as the causes for their successes or failures (1974). These causes can be placed in four primary categories: ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty (Asmus, 1994). Attribution theory provides some perspectives on students' beliefs of future success based on their understanding of their own abilities and

the perceived difficulty of tasks (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). The most common attributes are ability and effort, while the least common are luck and difficulty (Stipek, 1998). A student will equate success with the perception of themselves as good musicians or acknowledgement of the time spent preparing for the performance. Students are less likely to find success from luck or perceived difficulty. This theory connects well with flow theory in understanding the students' need to be well prepared for tasks that match their abilities with clear steps needed to be taken in order to achieve success.

**Social comparison theory**. It is inevitable that when students are engaged in the same activity side by side they will make comparisons to one another; these comparisons are of their own competence versus that of the other students (Asmus, 1994). This theory states that interactions within larger groups cause different motivations, depending on the environment in which the interactions occur; competitive structures have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation while collaborative environments have a positive influence on intrinsic motivation (Asmus, 1994).

## Summary

This chapter navigated literature related to avocational jazz learners and was divided into two distinct areas; jazz performer pedagogy and theories of motivation. The literature related to jazz pedagogy provides a clear history of the music in and out of academia by highlighting the overall goals in pedagogies for jazz learners – the majority of the literature speaks to methods that develop future performers of the music with higher level skills, presumably to reach a professional or semiprofessional level. As the presence of jazz education has increased since it first entered higher education in the late

1940s, the literature has focused on performer development and how student musicians can attain higher level skills. The literature reviewed and included for the framing of this study lacks comparable material in the area of developing avocational learners – learners who pursue learning music without the goal of achieving professional status or professional skill level.

The areas of motivation, particularly expectancy value, provide a framework for areas associated with avocational learners. It is through these theories that the researcher will look to investigate how these motivations are activated when a jazz learner is operating outside a traditional performance training program. The theories in the realm of motivation speak to the reasons students participate in a variety of activities and will aid this study by adding necessary descriptors to emerging themes from the participant interviews and focus groups. The review of literature has provided a way forward in the data gathering and analysis portion of the study; the study investigates motivations associated with learners in an avocational setting and available jazz pedagogies that support this population.

# Chapter III

# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

This phenomenological study employed a qualitative method for data collection by focusing on dialogue from participants who are currently active in a liberal arts jazz program, specifically in the northeast region of the United States. The intention was to learn about what factors are key to motivating students to seek out a non-major jazz program in college, how they are motivated to continue to learn, and what will keep them interested once they graduate. The phenomenological approach will, "describe what all participants have in common" (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 252) as it relates to their participation in the jazz programs. I was also interested in what aspects of the jazz program, and jazz generally speaking, are most engaging for students participating in school ensembles.

To gather a range of responses, I interviewed teachers with experience working in this unique environment along with student focus groups from the same programs. During an initial pilot study, it became clear that teachers have more to discuss from their observations as they relate to motivating and engaging their students than the students themselves. I investigated what they have observed in terms of teaching methods, program design, and elements of jazz itself that may prove appealing to students and help

them to retain a deep connection to the music when they are focusing on other academic pursuits. Teachers develop teaching methods through versions of trial and error and build on the best practices appropriate for their environments. I anticipated that participating teachers will have recognized the uniqueness of these students and can discuss what they have observed as appropriate methods to the design and instruction of their programs.

During the same pilot study, I found that students had not fully formed their ideas about essential elements of jazz, or the features of their respective programs, that are most attractive to them and motivating for them to continue to learn in the program. I spoke to students in focus groups as a way to spark community dialogue around related topics that make up the program. The focus group format allowed for more open dialogue generated by the students from open-ended questions by the researcher. "The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview" (Kitzinger, 1996, p. 299). I was especially curious how they came to their decision not to pursue music in college as a performance major, especially considering that they had some musical training prior to college. I was also interested in what factors were considered as ways to keep jazz active and allow them to improve as musicians.

**Participants and Setting**

The participants for this study will focus on liberal arts colleges in northeastern United States who have jazz programs in their music department as part of non-performance major course offerings. A target of six institutions were identified who share similar institutional and departmental make-ups. As I intended to, "select participants

who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored," a purposeful sampling procedure will be used (Creswell, 2011, p. 112). The rationale behind the focus on liberal arts colleges, rather than similar offerings at major universities, is that many (or most) of these colleges do not offer performance-based degrees and attract students by offering a more general education to students in all fields. As this study focused on students in the avocational setting, the liberal arts environment will likely host students who have elected not to pursue music performance as a career based on their decision to attend a college that does not offer advanced pre-professional training.

Another aspect to selecting participants at appropriate colleges is identifying a jazz teacher at each institution who has been on faculty for a sufficient period of time – approximately five years or more – teaching in an environment composed of nonperformance major music students. In this type of program, the jazz teacher is often responsible for multiple aspects of the jazz curriculum, including improvisation, ensemble, composition, and private lessons, among other curricular areas appropriate for the department. The multi-pronged responsibility is also common among music department faculty in a liberal arts college, which hopefully led to more insight into the experiences provided to the students. The data collection from the teacher perspective will consist of an in-depth interview addressing engagement and motivational factors.

The student participants for this study will be from the same college programs as the teachers. This allowed me to meet with students during the same campus visit as the teacher interviews. The format for collecting data from the student participants was in the form of focus groups rather than individual interviews. The concept was to allow open

dialogue among the students to unpack issues related to the motivations for them all to participate in the jazz program (Kitzinger, 1996). Issues related to their background with jazz, engagement with the music and learning more, how they value the music and their involvement, and how learning more and remaining active is important to them.

The process of interviewing teachers and students illuminated important areas for analysis that address motivation and engagement of avocational jazz learners. Themes were extracted from each data collection point and analyzed to find points of overlap that better explain the many perspectives housed in this group of students and area of jazz education.

**Procedures**

An initial list of 20 institutions was identified that met the criteria of the inquiry; these institutions are located in the Northeast United States. Focusing on institutions in the Northeast region allowed me to travel to each college to conduct the instructor interviews and student focus groups. In order to gather sufficient data, I needed to recruit participants from a minimum of four, but not more than 10, institutions (Creswell, 2011). Interviews were one-on-one with the researcher and lasted approximately 90 minutes. I needed a minimum of four students for the focus group, and each focus group session should not exceed eight participants lasting between one and two hours (Kitzinger, 1995). To recruit participants, I emailed the central jazz instructor at the selected institutions to outline the scope of the study and inquire as to their potential interest in participating. I then followed-up with a phone call to better explain the project and schedule a time to come to the campus to conduct the interviews.

**Design and Instrumentation**

A specific interview protocol (see Appendix D and E) was used for both formats; student focus groups and teacher interviews addressed in greater detail the components of each research question. These were semi-structured formats allowing for open dialogue among the students and an opportunity for the teacher to openly discuss their views on motivating and engaging avocational jazz learners when strict performance expectations, commonly found in university or conservatory performance programs, are removed from the curricular design of their liberal arts institution.

Table 1 below outlines sample interview questions paired with the corresponding research questions; the complete interview and focus group questions can be found on the interview and focus group protocols in Appendices D and E.

Table 1

*Interview / Focus Group Questions with Research Questions*

| Research Questions | Sample Interview Questions |
|---|---|
| RQ1: How are students motivated to learn and develop skills in jazz programs as non pre-professional music students? | 1. Do you have specific tools or methods you use to motivate your students?<br>2. What is least motivating to your jazz students?<br>3. When are your jazz students least motivated?<br>4. Can you say what is the strongest motivating factor for your students to learn jazz in this program? |

Table 1, *continued*

| | |
|---|---|
| RQ2: What expectations do students have for a non major jazz programs offered at their liberal arts college? | 1. What are your expectations for student success?<br>2. How do you express and manage your expectations with the students?<br>3. What do you expect/hope the students will be doing with jazz after they graduate? |
| RQ3: How can educators in this environment motivate and engage jazz learners when performance outcomes and expectations are not part of the program assessment? | 1. How do you engage these students during classes/rehearsals/lessons?<br>2. When do you find the students least engaged?<br>3. When do you find the students most engaged?<br>4. How do you know students are engaged during classes and rehearsals?<br>5. How do you generate and sustain engagement? |
| RQ3a: What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community? | 1. What challenges do you face as a teacher for this population of jazz learners?<br>2. What obstacles do you see the students facing when learning jazz at this level?<br>3. What do you perceive as the teacher's primary role in this environment? |

## Plan of Analysis

**Research question one**. RQ1 states: How are students motivated to learn and develop skills in a liberal arts jazz program as a non-pre-professional student majoring in music? To answer this question, I explored what about jazz music specifically encourages

students to continue active learning in college programs that are for non-music majors. Focus groups were conducted to open a dialogue among a few students in liberal arts colleges to discuss how they are motivated to continue learning jazz and how they remain engaged despite actively pursuing other academic interests. This conversation included questions about the music specifically that is attractive to the students enough for them to continue actively learning in a structured, educational jazz program.

**Research question two**: RQ 2 states: What expectations do students have for a non-major jazz programs offered at their liberal arts college? This area of inquiry was also part of the focus groups. By discussing expectations students have identified prior to enrollment I was be able to correlate their preconceived notions of a non-major college program with the design structure implemented by the teacher. This area was also addressed in the teacher interviews to determine if the teacher created the structure to match these expectations, and how he or she has perceived the successes, or shortcomings, of those design decisions.

**Research question three**. RQ 3 states: How can educators in this environment motivate and engage jazz learners with perceived atypical performance outcomes and expectations? What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community? The third research question was directed at the students as well as the teachers. Similarities and differences in these perspectives was part of the data analysis. An open-ended question during the interviews could be: What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community? Again, these questions were asked from the viewpoint of the student as well as how the teacher perceives their role based on experiences teaching avocational jazz students.

**Data Collection**

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for emerging themes related to the aims of the study. In order to solidify those themes interraters were used for the focus groups and the teacher interview transcripts were member checked. Interraters were used only for the data collected during student focus groups as, “data to be reviewed by the interraters should only be a segment of the total amount” (Marques & McCall, 2005, p. 441). Therefore, interraters were not used for data acquired from teacher interviews, rather this data was member checked after all data had been collected and themes are outlined. The interraters themselves were doctoral students at Teachers College, Columbia University in the music department. The interraters represented different areas of expertise in music education, ranging from jazz to composition, primarily at the college level. Each interrater read and reviewed two focus group transcripts. All of the transcripts, teacher interviews and student focus groups, were not read for these emergent themes until about two months after the final school visit. In doing so, I hoped to approach the transcripts with a fresh look coupled with utilizing any themes extracted by the interraters. The process of member checking was used to ensure the participants feel the extracted themes reflect an accurate representation of their experiences discussed during the interview (Creswell, 2014). The initial set of themes were stored in NVivo, which was used to help organize pieces of the transcripts within identified themes. The extracted themes were then viewed against the theoretical framework of expectancy value theory of motivation. Results were also compared against theories of jazz performance pedagogy to determine what aspects of performer development remain applicable in the avocational learner environment.

**Pilot**

A small pilot was conducted in the spring of 2016 at a local liberal arts college. The purpose of the pilot study was to gauge the usefulness of questions and identify areas worth pursuing in greater depth during the final data collection phase of the larger study. The pilot consisted of a small survey as well as short interviews with four participants at the college – three students and one professor (not a jazz instructor). The pilot was revealing in that the teacher perspective provided a wide array of insights into this community of avocational jazz learners and the approaches that have been effective in working with the students. The survey confirmed several assumptions about the students and allowed for follow-up questions during the interviews with three selected students. It was clear during this study that peer-to-peer interaction yield richer responses, while the teacher interview will produced insights into the needs of these learners and some methods that have proven effective. Although the survey was a helpful tool during the pilot study, the full study only included data collected through the teacher interviews and student focus groups. I had previous interactions with the students in various educational and performance capacities. During the interview portion of the pilot it was evident that this previous relationship, regardless of how substantial, influenced the interaction between myself and the participant during the interview portion. Although the data gathered was useful in honing the final interview questions, the relationship itself was discussed more than expected during the interview rather than the experiences of learning jazz in college. Therefore, the overall procedure would need to include participants with no prior musical or educational connection to me to allow more attention be given to the specific experiences of in the jazz learning community at their institution. During the

pilot interviews both the students and the instructor provided more information about their expectations for a jazz program than I had expected. Considering their input related to their expectations of participating in a jazz program, the interview protocol was edited to include more questions and time on this area during the formal data gathering period of the study. I also learned from the pilot how the students intersect their ideas of engagement, motivation, and overall experience learning jazz – this information led me to consider how to order the questions to promote more dialogue in these areas.

**Findings of the Pilot Study**

The findings of the pilot study were telling in regard to the range of inquiry and where I will best uncover deeper information to understand avocational jazz learners. From the perspective of the teacher I learned that their perceived role has a significant influence on the engagement value for the students in their classes. Although direct teaching methods were not discussed, there were areas in curriculum design and approach that were expanded upon more in the teacher interviews in the full study. This notion was only slightly reinforced during the student interviews; students acknowledged that rapport with the teacher was important to their positive experience in their jazz programs, however, the formation and connection of this relationship directly to the jazz ensemble experience was not specific. The student-teacher relationship as a factor for motivating and engaging the jazz students was explored further in the focus groups when the students have an opportunity to openly discuss how teacher rapport impacts their learning experience.

The pilot interviews touched on areas related to the inherent qualities of jazz that could be attractive to these avocational learners; jazz was a fun and social music appealing to a wide variety of students despite differing engagement goals. However, the teacher in the pilot study raised interesting points about jazz in general and the teacher role of promoting jazz within the educational atmosphere. The teacher felt a sense of duty when educating students about a music they have dedicated their life to exploring. As the mainstream popularity of jazz remains low, the teacher felt obligated to enrich a growing culture with a historically relevant art form that still retains value today, albeit in a different atmosphere than when jazz first entered academia nearly 70 years ago. The in-depth interviews with more teachers expanded on this sense of duty to the music and how that viewpoint may or may not have transferred into their programs in terms of curriculum design and teaching methods.

# Chapter IV

# STUDENT EXPERIENCES

## Introduction

To gather sufficient data for this study the researcher travelled to five institutions fitting the specified criteria (Chapter II) of the environment in need of further investigation. Faculty participants were recruited after direct contact from me explaining the study, which was followed by the faculty member asking for volunteers to participate in a focus group during the researcher's visit to campus. All the faculty who responded to these initial requests were enthusiastic about the scope of the inquiry and making themselves available. In each case the faculty participant invited the researcher to spend the day at the institution as way of observing the community environment, observe a class or rehearsal, and in all cases, meet the students who would later participate in a focus group. This extended invitation provided more observable context to the learning culture at each institution and opportunity to build a small rapport with participants prior to the interview or focus group.

All participants were assured of confidentiality by participating in the study and signed IRB approved forms acknowledging their understanding and consent to the study. Each institution has been given a pseudonym as have all individual participants, both students and teachers. Thus, all names appearing throughout this document whether a

student, teacher, or institution are pseudonyms. As a way of focusing in on avocational learners, identified intuitions are ones that do not offer music performance degrees. Therefore, after investigation throughout each college website it was concluded that students participating in music ensembles at the institutions were not pursuing degrees in music performance. All institutions publically identify themselves as liberal arts colleges offering range of programs of study. The following profiles will provide a context in which the researcher observed the students and subsequently interviewed them during spring campus visits.

**Liberal arts college**

Before profiling the institutions visited and presenting data on the student experience, it is helpful to have a brief look at why a liberal arts college may prove to be attractive to a prospective student, and how this research will help inform the data gathered from the students. A key tenet of the liberal arts experience is the small class size, low faculty-to-student ratio, and wide range of academic options (Astin, 1999). The understanding that the classes will be small provides the students with the "perception that the institution is student-oriented" (p. 4). Liberal arts colleges often purport that their, "curricula that range from a highly structured 'common core' to a completely idiosyncratic approach where students design their own programs" (p. 1).

Liberal arts colleges are positioned in such a way to focus more heavily on teaching rather than research, which may account for positive student outcomes and why students choose to attend a liberal arts college. In an earlier study about the affects of liberal arts education, a study of roughly 200 colleges found that institutions ranked

higher in research were ranked lower in student orientation, and vice versa, colleges ranked lower in research agendas were the regarded higher in the area of student orientation. The colleges with the latter distinction were liberal arts colleges, not larger, research-oriented universities (Astin, 1995). Students who view the institution as more student-oriented, "are more satisfied with the faculty, the quality of teaching, and the general education program" (p. 4).

**Institution Number One – Wolcott College**

Wolcott College is approximately 1,300 acres on the top of a hill overlooking the small town where it has been located since it was founded. There are nearly 1,900 students who all reside on campus, and the website-stated faculty ratio is 9:1. The researcher was invited to spend the day on campus observing three or four classes and spending time with Professor North in addition to their scheduled interview. I found Prof. Collins when I arrived in small café attached to the music building at approximately eight o'clock in the morning chatting and telling jokes with a few music students (not members of the jazz program). It was the first time we formally met – after speaking several times on the phone prior to make arrangements for the campus visit – and we began chatting in the near 30 minutes prior to the first class. He explained how he will be on campus many days of the week, including weekends, to remain connected to the campus community that exists among teachers and mostly the students. He is well known throughout the institution as a pleasant person and an engaging and popular professor.

We walked to the classroom, which was a choir rehearsal room, for the first class of the day – jazz history. There were eight students in the class and five had volunteered

to participate in the focus group following class. Nearly all the students were eating food and drinking coffee as the class was early, and Prof. Collins is accepting of the students bringing their breakfast to class. By starting the class Prof. Collins began by asking about an assignment that was coming up that segued to a discussion about the material and moving forward to new topics. It was a different agenda than the professor had told me he would be covering during that class, but it was apparent that he was reacting to what the students were eager to investigate. After the class finished the five students stayed for nearly 90 minutes for the focus group.

There were two focus groups conducted at this institution. The morning focus group included students from the jazz history course and the second focus group took place after the evening jazz band rehearsal. None of the students repeated the focus group; both groups were comprised of entirely different students. After spending the day with Prof. Collins, I continued with him to the jazz band rehearsal to help him prepare the room and pass out new music. It was a nice way to be introduced to the students as they were coming into the room to get ready for rehearsal. There were several members of the ensemble missing due to conflicts; therefore, the professor invited me to play a few songs with the students. The opportunity to make music with the students for a few moments was a helpful way to establish a connection to them in a musical way prior to conducting the focus group. The ensemble was essentially a traditional big band and the selections in the student folders were primarily stock charts purchased by the school with a moderate difficulty level, something in the context of possibly a high school big band level. The focus group took place after the rehearsal and was comprised of 11 students.

**Institution Number Two – Roxbury College**

Roxbury College is made up of approximately 2,900 students in the center of a relatively small town in the northeast. The proximity to many city attractions allows for a different community environment than ones found at other, more secluded institutions visited for the study. I exchanged many emails with Prof. Jansen prior to visiting the campus. He was quite inquisitive about the nature of the study and this sparked some excellent preliminary questions on his part to be better prepared before the interview. When I arrived on campus, Prof. Jansen met me in the parking lot and showed me to the small rehearsal space where we would conduct the interview prior to him coaching a jazz ensemble in the same space. Before the interview formally began we discussed this area of jazz education and elements he has found to be influential in his experiences working as a jazz instructor at a liberal arts institution. The space is smaller than one would expect for ensemble rehearsals and doubles as a storage space for rare and large percussion instruments. The room is the main jazz ensemble rehearsal space, in addition to other music ensemble rooms, and is decorated with many photos and concert posters from historical performances. While there are no academic classes taught in this space, the instructor talked briefly about his approach to incorporating historical elements into the ensembles as a way to motivate students and keeping a variety of images of these key figures in the space helps to make references to important figures during rehearsal.

The ensemble rehearsal was about two hours in total with a small break in the middle. I used the break to order pizza and pick it up prior to the focus group that would follow the rehearsal. Most of the ensemble students stayed for the focus group, totaling seven in all – two females and five males. The played 2 different songs while I was

observing, one student original composition and a group arrangement of a popular song. There was considerably more discussion about the original song and more attention given to the arrangement from the instructor. Each song was played completely at least twice after the discussion and helpful tips from the instructor were addressed. The focus group occurred in an adjacent and much larger room following an orchestra rehearsal that was using the space at the same time as the jazz rehearsal.

**Institution Number Three – Red Hook College**

Red Hook College is one that I had visited several times for other reasons in the past. I was familiar with the town it came from and to some degree the music program offered at the college. The campus is in a heavily wooded area of the northeast near several small towns. There are approximately 1,900 undergraduate students studying various fields – students can major in music studies, which is not a performance degree. Although I was familiar with the institution and program, I had not met Prof. Peale until I visited the campus specifically for collecting data. We also exchanged several emails and phone calls ahead of the visit to answer any preliminary questions and discuss aspects of this field we have found to be important and worth discussing more deeply. These prior conversations aided her in understanding the scope of the study and she admitted to preparing some information prior to the interview to better focus on the topics we intended to investigate. Her efforts were a way for me to have a deeper understanding of life at Red Hook College and some of the relevant statistics.

Similar to other institutions, after I finished the interview with Prof. Peale I observed her coaching a jazz ensemble for about 90 minutes. I did not interact with the

students directly but learned a lot about the type of instruction offered and the learning environment that was in existence at the school. Nearly the full rehearsal was spent on two original compositions, both from the guitar players in the group. They seemed quite challenging as I observed, and the ensemble stopped and restarted often to retry several difficult areas of the arrangements, and allow for the arranger to add clarity on the material at that point. The instructor sat towards the middle of the group, which was basically in a circle, and followed the lead of the students discussing the piece rather than interject her comments. She only added her take when a student directly asked for it. I enjoyed watching the community aspect of the program in action during the rehearsal, which helped focus me prior to holding the focus group immediately after the rehearsal in a separate room. Of the nearly 25 students in the ensemble, seven students had volunteered to take part in a focus group. I ordered pizza and it arrived just as we were getting settled to begin the focus group.

**Institution Four – Founders College**

Roxbury College is near relatively larger cities than the other institutions and sits alone in a small rural area. There are about 2,200 full time undergraduate students on campus and a state faculty ratio of ten to one. There was not an opportunity to meet with the professor prior to the interview and focus group; the interview was scheduled for the following day at a different location. I arrived at the campus and found the recital hall where the jazz ensemble would be rehearsing later that evening. I helped the professor set up the rehearsal space prior to the students arriving and we had a few moments to learn more about each other and about the current projects we are undertaking as musicians.

We determined that we knew many of the same people and had performed at many of the same venues in recent years. The rehearsal started about 20 minutes later than the stated start time, which I was told is a normal occurrence every week. During the rehearsal I also had an opportunity to introduce myself and since a few musicians were missing, the professor found an instrument for me to play a few songs with the group. It was a good experience and created an instant connect to the students who were excited to see a guest visit their rehearsal. The range of material in just a short rehearsal as wide, there was a popular funk song featuring one of the students singing, and a few classic charts from Count Basie and Duke Ellington. The instructor had a stack of music that he would hand out as he saw fit, which I later learned was his way of distributing repertoire he felt would engage the students best in that moment. He told me later it was more helpful to be flexible during the rehearsal in terms of the repertoire, so the students enjoy the experience. There was not much direct rehearsal of each piece, rather points about the form and playing them through completely one or two times before immediately moving to another piece. I left about half way through the rehearsal to pick up pizza for the focus group participants who stayed to speak with me after the rehearsal. There were about 20 students in the ensemble and 10 stayed to take part in the focus group.

**Institution Five – Worthington College**

Worthington College is located in a relatively small space in a small town in a hilly area. The hills seem to create a natural barrier creating a limit to how large the city could grow. Nonetheless, the campus is located near the center of town and within walking distance of several local attractions students often visit. The stated enrollment is

about 2,000 students with a faculty to student ratio of seven to one. The campus visit was arranged to meet one of two professors, Prof. Hopkins for lunch prior to the formal interview, class observation, and student focus group. There were several outdoor events going on in the center of the campus when I arrived, and I found Prof. Hopkins just outside the arts building. We walked to the cafeteria to get lunch and eat outside. We did not have that long to chat before we returned to the music building to set up for the interview. After the interview I observed Prof. Hopkins teach an improvisation class for about nine students, seven of whom volunteered to stay after class to be in the focus group. I offered to provide pizza again as I had done for other students, but the professor alerted me to the fact that the class was immediately following lunch and most of the students will bring food to the class. About half of the students walked in with full plates of food and caught up with one another while finishing their lunch and the professor prepared the material and sound system for the class. The students were clearly comfortable with the instructor and talked about concerts they had attended together recently before starting in on a review of the material covered the week prior. This is one of the few times when observing classes at the institutions did the professor play with the students throughout the entire course and it was a new dynamic to the instruction that the students seemed to enjoy. He had distributed at one point a collection of transcriptions and exercises to the students to reference throughout the semester, which was also a basis for homework at different points. During this class he had challenged the students to learn a John Coltrane solo in the book and began the session by asking any student to volunteer to play it. Only a couple students volunteered, and he helped them play through

it on his own instrument. Since the students already had lunch and would not want pizza, I brought a few sweet treats to have during our near 90-minute focus group.

**Confidentiality**

All identifiers to the institutions and participants of this study have been removed, and pseudonyms are used in all references to any participants and institutions. Six professors were interviewed, and 49 students participated in focus groups. There were six interviews (faculty) and six focus groups (students) representing five institutions.

**Student Experience**

The study sought to uncover the experiences of students participating in avocational jazz programs at their colleges. The intent in gathering data for this study was to learn about the motivational factors in jazz learning experiences. As the study was divided into two key elements – students and teachers – the method for gathering data was altered for each level of participant. Teachers completed in-depth interviews with the researcher for approximately 90 minutes and students participated in focus groups for the same duration of time while the researcher visited their campuses. The focus group was determined to be the best avenue for data collection from the students as the dynamic of dialogue over a mutual subject is enriched among peers as opposed to a one-on-one interview format – a conclusion drawn from the results of a small pilot study.

Data were gathered from six focus groups comprised of students participating in jazz ensembles at their representative university. A total of 49 students joined the focus groups; forty-one male students and eight female students. The data presented here

represents the emergent themes from these focus group sessions. The organization of the data begins with student expectations for studying jazz prior to college and what they expected from experiencing jazz in college. These perceptions point to the areas under investigation – primarily motivations – including exercising creativity, value diversity of collegiate experiences, perceived motivators, social outlet and the opportunity to exercise creativity. Through these focus groups students began to articulate the key motivating factors for their continued directed jazz learning and what impact they expect these experiences to have on their college years and even beyond.

## Expectations

**Previous jazz experience**. All the students discussed various levels of their involvement with jazz prior to coming to college, but every student had participated in some ensemble in high school. The students reported three distinct areas of expectations regarding their continued experience with jazz at college; 1) continuation of high school jazz, 2) no expectation of jazz at college, 3) brand new musical experience.

**Pre-college experiences and expectations**. Most of the students chose to attend a liberal arts college due to other academic interests beyond music and made that part of their selection criteria, which also transferred to how they managed their expectations for music when they went to college. Calvin from Roxbury College said, “I didn’t bring my trombone to college, I didn’t look for colleges solely based on the strength of the music departments.” By not bringing an instrument to college Calvin acknowledged this activity would not continue whether it was available at the college or not. In the same vein, Nicholas from Wolcott College stated,

> I had no plans to play in jazz band when I was in college, but just like what happened with Prof. Collins I was auditioning for – I was practicing my audition piece for orchestra in my freshman year at like 11:30pm at night upstairs, and Prof. Collins found me; he dragged me into his office, and convinced me to join jazz band. Here I am, four years later.

Nicholas had planned to continue playing his instrument but did not necessarily extend that expectation to a formal ensemble and learning situation at college until the professor recruited him to join the jazz band. Liz from Roxbury College entered a different institution with assumptions of continued involvement in music: "I actually transferred here, too, from a school that had literally no music scene at all, which is why I transferred."

**School choice – access to opportunities**. All the students reported some experience in music ensembles prior to going to college; however, the opportunity to play in an ensemble in college had varying degrees of importance regarding school selection. Some students stated the need to have the ability to continue playing music while others were seeking a varied college experience – which many associates directly with the ethos of a liberal arts college education in general. Paul from Wolcott College said, "I knew I wanted a small school that had an active music program." The access to opportunity in many forms also played a factor in deciding on the right college, as Timothy from the same institution added,

> That ability to really build your schedule as you please was incredibly fascinating to me. I think I, coming from small Midwestern town, I wanted to live the art student vibe. Yeah, but really the inclusivity of it all. The ability to have your professors on a moments notice was incredibly important to me. I guess I didn't think about music before coming here.

In terms of factoring into the decision to apply to a particular college or not the ability to be involved was not always a priority. Timothy said, "When I was applying to schools, it

wasn't important at all, but, now it's nice. A bunch of nice kids in the music department." Malcolm from Wolcott College added, "I think that as far as the school goes itself, I wasn't really sure what to expect, I knew I wanted something small and something that would allow me to do a lot of different things."

A lot of effort goes into a learning an instrument at any level and students finishing high school and transitioning to college likely spent formative years in school learning an instrument, which in some cases produces a need to continue with that path. Jose from Founders College recalled,

> When I was in high school I played in a bunch of different ensembles, I was very active in music. And I ended up deciding not to go to music school but I knew that regardless of where I was going to go I wanted to keep playing trumpet, 'cause I already put in so much time and effort into getting good. I figured it would be a waste to just stop.

In terms of making a final selection on a school, visiting the campus and interacting with the music professors prior to making a decision provided some foundations for expectations for continuing music in college at some level. Paul from Wolcott College remembered,

> At some of the other schools I looked at, I applied, actually an early decision, and I reached out to them using the jazz band director there. I guess like their, Prof. Collins, and he was a real jerk quite frankly. He was basically like, why don't you apply, and see if you get in, and then we'll talk, and I'm like, "Give me a break."

Paul revealed the importance of being able to relate to the jazz educator at an early stage of selecting a college. Alicia remembered,

> When I was looking at Wolcott, I was wanting an option to be able to do everything, even though I ended up not doing it at first. Not being confined to being one type of person, but being able to be, simultaneously, an athlete, a student, a musician, former a fun person.

The primary emergent themes, in terms of how jazz learning played a role in the lives of students, focused on *social outlet, exercising creativity, peer motivators,* and the *value of diverse learning* in college. The first area that set the stage for these themes to come later came from the various expectations the students had about the opportunities for music, specifically, jazz once they reached college. These expectations could have formed once they enrolled in the college, or conversely, been previously identified as a program element they intentionally looked for in a school before applying. In most cases when pre-expectations were set of what they sought in music programs they were met once they arrived on campus. In other cases, students did not form expectations for collegiate music involvement but subsequently were pleasantly surprised by the enrichment the jazz ensembles added to their college experience.

**Value diversity and variety in college experience**. An overwhelming theme emerging in different forms from the focus groups was that the students were coming into college not entirely convinced they would focus on a singular subject in college; however, they knew they needed an environment that encouraged them to explore alternatives. Even within the institutions that offered a music degree, albeit not performance based, students undertook a double major or at the minimum a minor in another academic subject.

**Uncertainty and indecisiveness**. Students often suggested that choosing to attend a liberal arts institution was a reflection of their indecisive personalities. The recognition of this trait was not framed in a negative context or that lacking specific direction constituted a lack of focus or desire; rather they approached their academics and music with an open mind to an abundance of influences. “I think a lot of us here are a little

indecisive, just a bit. But we come here and Wolcott's a place that allows us to pursue everything that we want and gives us the resources to pursue the things we want to pursue" (Theodore, Wolcott College). Other students from the same college added similar thoughts:

> So, I actually am an interdisciplinary major so essentially I couldn't make my mind up and I created my own major. So the indecisiveness is like a big part of my life. (Stephanie, Wolcott College)

> I mean when I was considering this college the open curriculum was very, very good thing in my opinion and I just didn't want to go to a college where I had so many requirements and that if I wanted to do like a bunch of things in different areas that it wasn't you know, that it was going to be impossible to do. (Jack, Wolcott College)

**Need for Variety**

As part of recognizing the notion that students might lack the specificity of their counterparts at other schools, these liberal arts jazz students discussed the idea that more than having an indecisive goal, they knew they needed an opportunity to explore variety in college.

> It's just ... there's such a wide variety of programs and activities and clubs and things you can be a part of. And, just the fact that you can be a part of all them simultaneously. I'm in Student Government, Jazz band, on the track team, I'm in a fraternity. I feel like you don't have the opportunity to do that at all schools. (Albert, Founders College)

> That was the biggest thing for me is there was so many things that I was interested in and that I had made a part of my life. And I wasn't really sure which ones I wanted to let go of. And, as I said, I thought music was going to be the one I was gonna let go of but here we are. And, now that's just something that I ... the ability to ... A little bit right after this, I'm going to go to a lab and then stare at a microscope for two hours. But, this is just what I'm doing and I love it. The ability to do a little bit of everything or do a lot of everything is just, it's awesome. I love it. (Jose, Founders College)

> I chose to come to Roxbury because I wanted to have a balance of both music and academics. That, of course, becomes complicated when you want to be practicing and you start to resent your academic classes. (Ryan, Roxbury College)

> When I came, I knew that I wanted to play in the jazz ensemble. After the first semester, I wasn't entirely sure whether I would keep up with it. I forget who said this, really, but the fact that I'm not a music major and I still have access to a cohort of phenomenally talented musicians, like these ones, speaks in volumes about how people here don't really get big heads about the fact that they're really good at what they do, and they're willing to play with anyone. It's a very collaborative atmosphere. (Calvin, Roxbury College)

**Less Strict Environment**

A portion of the selection process to attend the school they chose had to do with the flexibility of the curriculum. All institutions purported to have some form of "open curriculum" in which students could pick and choose to a high degree what courses would make up their degree track. In terms of music, this aspect translated into the students being allowed to take a variety of courses not necessarily related to jazz. When compared against their expectations, student musicians anticipated a higher level of rigidity to the curriculum and that veering away from prescribed courses for specific degree tracks would not be permissible. Considering that none of these institutions offered music performance degrees, the opportunity to explore other courses outside their "main focus" was a plus in their decision to attend. Students mentioned the following:

> I did want a small liberal arts school, and Wolcott's big plus was that you could take any class. It doesn't matter if your math major, you can go do ensemble. There's just so much freedom that the freedom to do music is a natural extension to that. You can take classes anywhere, but that just allowed me to pursue my music more in my own time. It didn't have to be, I'm becoming a music minor or nothing, because I didn't even know if I wanted to be a musician. (Jason Wolcott College)

> So I just felt like within the lack of structure of the liberal arts and jazz, I kind of just realized that the people that were doing it best that really were living it up were making their own way of doing it, instead of just going by what the professors were saying. (Aaron, Red Hook College)

> Before college, I was like, "Oh yeah, definitely violin, chamber music." But now, well that's still definitely a pretty obvious goal for me but jazz is just as much up there as an option, I feel like. So that was definitely really cool. And I don't think I would have gotten that opportunity at a conservatory because I think if I had done that, I would have pretty much been forced into one lane. So this is just really nice because you've got a lot of options, not just with stuff that's not music but between jazz and classical. (Tristan, Worthington College)

**Desire to Explore More**

Upon arrival the access to an open curriculum meant that students were directed to new learning they never anticipated, and in some cases meant strengthening their desire to learn music in all forms, both within and outside jazz ensemble.

> Everyone has a lot of different interests and there's a lot of freedom to explore all that stuff. And I've totally had that, yeah. So I feel like if it wasn't for coming to Red Hook and trying out different things about music, I probably wouldn't be a music major. (Landon, Red Hook College)

> Eventually decided that I loved doing this science that I'm involved in and the biology that I'm involved with too much to give that up, and vise versa I couldn't do the science without the music. (Dylan, Wolcott College)

**Need for Creative Outlet**

For students who knew they wanted to remain creative in college, the openness of the program structure was a motivator to learn more and be involved more with music performance. Some comments are as follows:

> It's unlike anything else I've ever done before, and I just completely like go inside of myself and am in this space that I can't access any other way but through jazz. (Stephanie, Wolcott College)

> And then I realized here just how easy it was to get involved in all kinds of different musical activities, and I realized I absolutely want to keep it a part of my life here. (Martin, Founders College)

**Artistic community.** In areas reported later in the chapter we find motivators from the community aspect of the jazz experience, and at the moment the notion of being a member of an artistic community existed prior to participating in jazz ensemble.

> You guys are all individually better than us, and collectively, so much better than us. I think that just goes to show the strength of the community on campus, and yes, this is not a music school, but a lot of people do care about it still. People at Wolcott are creative and artistic, and it's not just about the academics. Jazz, at least for me, it's whatever you want it to be at Wolcott. (Timothy, Wolcott College)

> I was looking for somewhere where there would be a community of people who were like minded, and that they were interested in music, but they're not going to be the type who were trying to go on to pursue professional careers, and they're going to be very cutthroat, and practice six hours a day, and stuff like that. I feel that Hamilton is a good balance. That's a good way to put it. (Paul, Wolcott College)

**Priorities of music in college.** The issue of how to prioritize music within a busy academic load was raised at several moments for different contexts, and it will become more relevant in terms of overall musical experience, and with regards to expectations of growth, students recognize that musical progress might not move as rapidly due to their focus on a variety of academic interests. Joshua from Founders College stated, "we have a lot of different other things going on. We're not mainly focused on music so I don't always get to practice."

**Interdisciplinary options**. The concept of attaching music to other interests was also important to liberal arts jazz students. Whether projects developed directly combining jazz to other arts, the ability to explore the possibility was an aspect speaking to the need for variety in college – something students identified as being a hallmark of

the liberal arts experience. Chris from Founders College loved that he was involved in a, "dual project incorporating music and electrical engineering." Others stated:

> Yeah, there's a really good electronic music department, or like experimental stuff. Yeah, so, it's cool because you can be in the jazz program here, but still branch out into other parts of the music department if you have any interest in classical, electronic, etc. (Logan, Red Hook College)

> Because it's a liberal arts college and there's also real strong studio arts and different sorts of other, like theater and dance, you really are given the opportunity to make music with other artists in different mediums, which is pretty sweet. (Landon, Red Hook College)

**Jazz Ensemble as Social Outlet**

All of the ensembles at the institutions visited offer the jazz ensemble essentially as an extra-curricular activity, which was one of the criteria in selecting institutions to participate in the study. The extra-curricular notion meant that any student in the university could participate in the ensemble. The dynamic of these ensembles meant that nearly all of the students were academic majors in other fields who decided to participate in the jazz ensemble as a form of recreational activity, although all the ensembles at these institutions would award a form of credit whether it be towards the major or as an elective from another program. The study was intended to uncover what aspects of the jazz ensemble experience are appealing to avocational jazz students – students who identify as being non-professional in training – and during every focus group the point was emphasized that playing in the jazz ensemble represented a departure from the stresses of their other academic lives. "I just need music to stress relief, to keep me sane, to have an outlet" (Carlos, Founders College). The jazz ensemble represented a dedicated time to participate in a musical atmosphere as well as exercise a moment of social outlet

in an otherwise pressure drive academic load. “I’ve always done jazz as just a way to socialize.” (Calvin, Roxbury College).

Whether the students enjoyed the act of playing music or the comradery of the ensemble, the importance of having a regularly scheduled social outlet was essential to their college experience. Within this social structure we unearthed motivators that prompt the students’ desire to continue progressing with jazz music. The form of social outlet – reported as musical or otherwise – was discussed a form of community. The community of jazz ensemble supported one another by motivating each to improve, or at the very least, keep jazz active in their college lives.

> I think it’s been a little more, it’s still causal as in the fun parts of it are still there, it’s not as focused as I used to be and not like practicing three hours a day but it’s still fun to do. And it’s casual but at the same time there’s a level of professionalism in it that I still enjoy a lot. (Jack, Wolcott College)

Nicholas, also from Wolcott College, added, “I think music, and practice for me is a stress reliever more than anything.” To come to jazz ensemble is a sense of joy. “I really like playing saxophone, and I really love playing jazz with other people. It’s really fun for me” (Sean, Roxbury College). Other students had similar sentiments:

> When I was abroad it became a priority of finding social connections so I would spend a lot more time like going to jazz clubs or going to student groups that talked about jazz or organized jazz things, or played at the balls of the college I was at. So it’s become much more of a real life priority for me I think over the past couple of years then an academic priority. (Stephanie, Wolcott College)

> So, it’s mainly been the kind of fun thing to do like stress reliever kind of thing. So, if I showed up next year and I’m playing a hard piece and Prof. Wilson’s like, "You sound like shit. This needs to sound amazing by next week or else you’re failing." It just wouldn’t work for me, at all. For me if it becomes something that’s for fun to just have a good time to a cause of stress it’s just not going to work ‘cause I have enough stressors in my regular life here. So, yeah, it wouldn’t work. (Julian, Founders College)

> The thing about music I think for all of us is it is a course of stress relief, we don't do this because it's a chore. We do this because we want to do it. We want to play, we ant to put our soul into the music. (Jack, Wolcott College)

**Community building.** The element of community was represented in multiple dimensions for the students, defined as everything from like-minded music students to an environment that was pressure-free amidst the pressure of college life. Among other dimensions were: safety in the sense of community from a built-in support system to trying new music to the expectation that there will be an audience for recitals to supporting new musical endeavors. The students share a common personal aspect; they are in college to pursue other fields and all come together once per week to play in a jazz ensemble. They do not expect there to be peer pressure around professional goals; rather they receive support from peers experiencing similar situations in and outside of the jazz ensemble. "Teachers and students are super open and supportive of what everyone's doing" (Dylan, Red Hook College). Other comments were as follows:

> I would say the motivating factor for me is more like the community, just personally. Because these are all my friends. It's funny in that wanting to get better is wanting to be able to keep on playing with people that you enjoy playing with and be growing together. (Tony, Red Hook College)

> I think there's another sense of community here that I've kind of rebuild and I think that part of that is the ability for people to do what they want to do and I think some of the liberal arts stuff allows itself to have a community with a bunch of different people doing different things. (Malcolm, Wolcott College)

> The whole band's very nice and easygoing and fun so that's a really nice environment to be a part of. It's like low-stakes, I guess. But, that's kind of what makes it fun. (James, Founders College)

> I basically can walk into the practice room any given time of any day and see a friend in a practice room, which is super strange, but also that's inspiring in the kind of competitive, healthy competitive sense, because there's something about this community and the comradery that makes practicing almost inherently more social, or more rewarding in that it becomes a point of shared experience. (Emily, Roxbury College)

> I mean yeah, that's definitely my favorite part of I think my jazz experience here is the community and also just there's so many opportunities like playing three different jazz ensembles at one time. (Tristan, Worthington College)

**Competition as Motivator**

The concept of competition produced mixed feelings among the students. When discussed in terms of expectations about the school they chose they identified the fact that they did not want an environment that was, "cutthroat" in terms of students competing among one another. However, students recognized a positive form of competition as it related to inspiring one another to achieve and do more within music.

One location visited, Roxbury College, students discussed a more length the concept of competition as a supporting motivator.

> I guess people have talked about this too before, but I feel like there's no sense of competitiveness. There's no sense of comparing yourself to other people, in terms of what your playing. I feel like it's a really collaborative experience. (David, Roxbury College)

The community of support extends beyond the classroom when students want to support each other in public performances, and use that experience as a way to inspire their own development.

> One of the places in which I'm most driven to practice is when I go see other people's shows, because there's definitely competition. I think that's healthy too, but it's more of a competition like, "Wow. I want to be able to play with those people," like, "That person can do that? Wow. I want to be able to do that," just because you want to be able to do it, and you want to be able to express yourself musically in everything that you can think and you can hear. That's still a competition, but I think that's a really healthy competition. Yeah. I think that's what certainly drives me, is I want to be better and better and better, but not at the downfall of somebody else. (Sebastian, Roxbury College)

> I think while we're on the door on the subject of contrasting the conservatory environment, something else that speaks to how self-driven, self-motivated the

> music scene here as a whole is, is that when you're at a conservatory, there's, I assume, much more pressure on the musicians to practice, because if you don't practice, the logic is, "Why aren't you practicing? You're at a conservatory. You're here to practice." Here, for almost everyone, save music majors right, which is actually a lot of people that make music without being music majors, it's something extra. It's something extra that people throw so much of themselves into, which is obviously something that doesn't make me want to compete with them, but it makes you want to match them. It makes you want to push yourself to that same limit. (Ryan, Roxbury College)

**Community Motivators**

As this study sought to uncover motivating factors for students to continue learning jazz in an avocational setting in college, social elements as well as the overall experience emerged as prime motivations to continue learning. Similar to areas previously outlined in this chapter, many of these areas are addressed in context of community and peer influence. That influence takes the form of "positive competition" as well as general support for each other's achievements. Nonetheless, students feel a strong sense of motivation generated by their peers. Aaron from Red Hook College recalls, "You find yourself relying more on your peers and your fellow musicians than your professors a lot of the time." Sean from Roxbury College adds,

> What I would say about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is that while intrinsic motivation obviously needs to come from myself, I also think that being around other people that are intrinsically motivated can elevate your intrinsic motivation.

Other students had related comments:

> After having played here for many years and developing a musical relationship with people and maturing, but I think about my level of maturity when I came in, I was like I'm entering into a new environment, like competitive. That's what I have to be. And if I had done that, and entered into an environment of prodigal players, just insane people who live and breathe jazz music since they were little which was not the case for me, I would have been intimidated in a way that could have been negative in my growth as a musical, I feel like, just knowing myself personally. (Aaron, Red Hook College)

> I've come out of our meetings, and been really motivated to practice jazz, because I want to become such a better...so much better at playing jazz. Unfortunately, that feeling kind of dies pretty quickly after. Most of the time when I practice, I might spend- For every hour I practice, I might spend zero to five minutes practicing jazz. (Kevin, Wolcott College)

> There aren't that many more people pursuing music on a technical level in terms of technical ability, there are a lot of people approaching music with a lot of creativity. That's really inspiring to be around. (Ryan, Roxbury College)

> I mean, I think for me, I, from my own perspective, tend to spend too much time thinking about music and not enough time actually doing it so actually getting to play with people is exciting. (Kelly, Worthington College)

**Prioritizing Active Jazz Learning**

As part of the collegiate experience, students are going through a self-assessment of how to prioritize aspects of their personal and academic lives. The enjoyment factor for playing in jazz ensembles and classes remains high, but that commitment to ensembles comes with the realization that time outside of those dedicated rehearsal spaces and times is limited. All the students at some point in the group acknowledged that the time between jazz sessions holds a different set of priorities than the music itself; students feel the pressure of academics when they are not playing music. Along the lines of this insight, students also recognize that their overall musical progress is limited when they cannot dedicate more time to individual practice outside of the scheduled rehearsal time for jazz ensemble. While some will discuss this aspect as limiting their growth, others will acknowledge that they expected the challenge of priorities when they came to the school – they are happy to continue playing and learning jazz music, but they realize that they must prioritize other areas of academic life over musical practice. Albert from

Founders College acknowledges, “Well for me, I really love playing trumpet especially jazz music, but I have a really hard time with keeping up with practicing.” Others stated:

> But, for instance, last spring a lot of us played in the musical and the music we played was way harder than anything we’ve done in Jazz Band. So, that was the first time I actually went in the practice room for a couple of hours each week to practice it and we only had two weeks to learn the music. For that we had an actual responsibility of they are the people acting or actually following us it’s not like we’re just playing for 10 people at a market down the street. (Joshua Founders College)

> But for me a lot of the academic stuff outside of band is first and then whatever time I have outside of that I try to put to music. (Peter, Wolcott College)

**Exercising Creativity**

While the students in this study are not pursuing performance-based degrees, a common theme that students reported as important was their need to be able to exercise creativity in these musical outlets. By exercising creativity, the students were engaging in critical thinking as opposed to technical proficiency levels that would be developed in highly performance-based programs. Without prompting students to make institutional comparisons, students in each of the focus groups discussed their experiences as they might be compared to their counterparts in conservatories or universities pursuing music performance as future profession. These comparisons became an excellent launching point in framing how they view the practice of jazz within the greater context of the liberal arts college environment. Having the regular opportunity to exercise their creativity was a major source of motivation. A key aspect of this creative outlet was the opportunity to compose original music – equally as either an expectation when arriving at the school as much as a motivating benefit to the experience after joining the jazz

ensembles. Ethan from Red Hook College stated, “I think I moved to composition as being something I didn’t expect, but was pleasantly surprised by.” Others added:

> Two hours is kind of all we really have, aside from maybe a half hour sometime during the week to practice. So yeah I kind of just joined to keep up my interest in music ‘cause it’s really the one creative outlet that I’m confident at so yeah I didn’t want it to go by the wayside. (Carlos, Founders College)

> As a function of studying at a liberal arts school, there’s a lot of conceptualizing of how the music should sound rather than diving into the technicalities or compensating with certain technical exercises, certain practices. (Emily, Roxbury College)

**Composition**

A part of all the conversations was the need, and opportunity, to compose new music. The process of music composition was encouraged in all the visited programs and the students identified the experience and regular opportunity as a way to motivate themselves to engage more deeply with the music with an added outlet to express themselves creatively. The students had the opportunity to write and perform original music and learn about the composition process from their instructors.

> But what I was going to say earlier, actually, was that I feel like I’ve noticed in composition class with Prof. Peale, she’ll get really excited if someone writes a piece that sounds like themselves. It’s like, “Oh, Ethan, that sounded like you.” Not just like, “Oh, that was a sick chart.” Which is really cool. It gets more personal that way. I had never really composed before here, so it got me more excited about trying to find my own compositional style rather than trying to write hip music or whatever. (Ethan, Red Hook College)

> Which, that’s good but there are a lot of opportunities to kind of challenge yourself within that. I had no experience composing jazz and some of us took Jazz Workshop ... that was the name of it? Yeah. So there’s Jazz Workshop with Prof. Wilson so we had the opportunity to learn how to compose and play your own pieces. And learn how to be a better jazz player I guess outside of this. (James, Founders College)

**Liberal Arts Versus Conservatory**

As a way to understand the environment in which these students operate, many of the participants offered the comparison to programs offered in conservatories, or at the very least performance-based programs at other major universities. By accounting for these comparisons, the students explained the difference in terms of school choice and the opportunities they pursued at their current institution. The understanding they gathered was that they would find more opportunity to expand their personhood at the liberal arts college as opposed to life at a conservatory. These ideas were not proposed as a positive versus negative experience in how students in conservatory training programs perceived their goals; rather the students participating in this study recognized their desire to explore alternatives to music that may contribute meaning to their music making. In this brief section we see how students draw their comparisons to the conservatory experience as well as how they articulate the practice of learning jazz music as making meaningful connections to other aspects of their lives. Jazz students realized that they could pursue music in tandem with other interests and still progress as musicians despite not attending a performance degree program. Theodore from Wolcott College said, "There's also people who are so far beyond that, it's not like all of the best musicians go to music schools." Others added:

> The goal is to try and get the most out of the liberal arts experience and out of a conservatory by practicing really hard and being really disciplined about it. It's probably naïve to think that you can really, fully do both. Having said that, I do think that there are things that I've come across here that I don't think that I would have come across in a conservatory. (Ryan, Roxbury College)

> I feel like a lot of the same stuff. Certainly, one of the reasons that I tried to come here and study music and not try for a conservatory is that I feel like this is a place where there's still a lot of great people, like great instructors and faculty and also the really talented students. (Sean, Roxbury College)

Part of the students' understanding of the differences between liberal arts colleges and conservatories was their academic ability to draw influence to the music from other sources, something the students at Roxbury College were keenly aware of.

> I guess that being at a liberal arts school like Roxbury, I feel like the outside influences have been important in shaping things, because being a virtuosic musician is cool in some ways, but then also not just being able to play fast and cool things, but then also coming up with the coolest concepts behind the scenes of that. (Steve, Roxbury College)

> I think that had I gone to a conservatory where it was competitive and where my grades were all about how much I practiced and how well I was doing or comparing me to other people who were doing better, I think that that would really have burnt me out on music. (Calvin, Roxbury College)

> Being in a conservatory, it seems like you're trying to beat someone. You're trying to get good for a complete self-interest kind of like, "I want to just be better because I want to have a gig. That's the only way I can play out, is if I'm better." It's like this nasty push someone else down in order to get myself up there. (David, Roxbury College)

The students have recognized they need the skills to properly express these other influences but are grateful for the opportunity in their college experience to have the structure that provides those other influences in tandem with their jazz playing.

> I agree with a lot of what everybody has been saying. The more you practice, the more tools you have to express yourself, and being at a liberal arts school means having more experiences linked to whatever political, social, cultural issues are at hand that give you a reason to want to express yourself, rather than just being able to play notes correctly. I think that's really valuable. (Emily, Roxbury College)

> We were having a conversation exactly on this subject. Basically, it's just a general gist of what he was saying, but essentially, in order to be a good, like a really good musician, in his opinion, you need to be able to play, and you need to have something to play about to make good music. Conservatory students make the choice to spend years, maybe 16 through 22 or 18 through 22, if they go to just a college conservatory, to spend those years getting the ability to play, and then spend the rest of their years or the years right after gaining experience with which to play. I'm saying you need to have things to play about. That's interesting. (Greg, Roxbury College)

> Since I've been here, I just know that my experience as compared to my friends who went to conservatories has been totally different. Whenever I talk to them, they're always complaining about how monochromatic it is and how they don't feel like they're actually developing there, that the classes don't really mean that much to them and I think that has been the total opposite experience for me at Worthington. I think everything that I've learned, every class I've taken at Worthington has had enormous effect on how I am as a musician. So I think that wasn't surprising to me but I think it's surprising in retrospect that I didn't realize that I would get such a wholesome musical education at Worthington. (Ivan, Worthington College)

> I think at conservatory it's kind of like you're forced to do all this stuff and it can seem like a chore. I think because of everything else that's going on, it just seems really refreshing and all the time that I've put into jazz music in general, it's just completely my own volition and it's something that I really want to be doing actively as opposed to being at conservatory where's it's kind of like "Oh man, I really have to do this" type of thing and it doesn't really feel like work for that reason. (Tristan, Worthington College)

**Role of the Jazz Teacher**

The primary contributing motivational and engagement factors for the students to experience jazz in college is directly connected to their relationship with the jazz instructor at the school. As part of identifying institutions to visit, a criterion was set that each school have one full-time professor dedicated to the jazz area of the music department. The role of this instructor varied at each institution in terms of what courses they taught, however, all the instructors were directing the ensembles in all sizes – small groups and large ensemble. At each institution there were approximately 30 to 40 students participating in jazz at some level, mostly in one of the ensembles. The small number of students involved in the jazz area meant that all the jazz students had substantial access to the jazz faculty and felt a strong connection to that instructor. All the students discussed their relationship with the jazz professors on a personal level as much

as on a musical level, and in nearly all cases the students reported that the jazz instructor was the prime motivating factor for continued jazz learning at their college. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the instructors also held their relationship with the students in high regard, often extending beyond the ensemble settings.

The instructors made the learning of jazz connected to other areas of their academic lives and encouraged the students' growth without making unreasonable demands that would deflate their enthusiasm for learning jazz. In the following section we will see how this role was perceived by the students at all the institutions and in different levels, all of which point to the how the instructor acted as a strong and positive motivating factor for the students to learn jazz. The instructors were there to support learning on an individual level, students responded to, "not getting judged on how you play" (Ethan, Red Hook College) positively as pressure to meet high expectations for performance outcomes were not associated with the overall learning process.

Often times the jazz instructor serves as a general support system to the students that extends beyond the classroom, as Logan found with Prof. Peal.

> But in the end, she is a really special and interesting presence to have around, because not only is she a fantastic musician and composer, but she's also just a really good person to talk to about anything, it doesn't even have to be musical. She really, really cares about her students. We were talking recently about post grad plans, and I was telling her "Oh, I might do this, I might do that," and they might have not necessarily been music related, but she was super supportive of that. (Logan, Red Hook College)

The jazz teacher is the community builder within the university and the music department that the students appreciate. That sense of community in part comes from the teacher's ability to convey their passion for the music.

> I think the jazz program is great, I think Prof. Collins has done a fantastic job with it building interests about the program and really creating a big community within that sense of music department. (Malcolm, Wolcott College)

> I think that the one thing he said, he's passionate for the music is above all else. The man breathes jazz music, I mean ... And I think just the fact that he's so in love with it makes jazz band more enjoyable as an experience. (Chris, Founders College)

> I've met and have teachers who have passion for music who cannot give that to their students and explain that well but there's something about Prof. Collins that he's just able to connect with you and get you into that mode where you want to be able to embrace the music for what you want it to be and play it. And I think that's what makes him a great educator in my mind. (Peter, Wolcott College)

> And it's just like the fact that he's so real and honest all the time, it just means a lot because it think college students they're used to kind of going though the motions but when you go to jazz band you can expect to learn something that is actually probably going to impact your life in a very real way that is maybe not even related to music at all. I hope in 10 years that Prof. Collins is still part of all of our lives. (Stephanie, Wolcott College)

> He really goes out of his way to change people's experiences at Wolcott for the better. He introduced them to new opportunities and stuff, and I think that's pretty cool. (Natalie, Wolcott College)

> He actually cares about his students. It's not just about the class. He wants to invest his time in you, to help you down the road. (Paul, Wolcott College)

Prof. Collins' passion for the music extends to the students to take the experience of jazz into other facets of their lives.

> He wants to shape you as a person, and he sees jazz as the ultimate tool for doing that, just because of the way that he looks at the world. (Robert, Wolcott College)

> Tuesday nights and jamming with us and eating dinner with us and doing that kind of thing so I think he does a good job of keeping that balance of "Yes, these are my students but they're also my band mates, in a way." And I think his laid back style lends itself to that as well. (Jesse, Worthington College)

The friendship the students feel towards the teacher is paired with their respect for their musical abilities, something Triston felt towards Prof. Hopkins.

> I always have this huge respect for him and I think that comes from how he is as a player and a bunch of other stuff, but yeah, it's just this really nice balance between him as a professor and him as just a friend, kind of, which is pretty cool. (Tristan, Worthington College)

## Conclusion

Better understanding the musical background and expectations of the students prior to and after entering college is an important step in the investigation of how educators can develop programs that support their students' sense of motivation and engagement with jazz music. We found during student focus groups that there are key elements to their experience that drive their ambitions at a liberal arts institution. The student discussions uncovered areas of peer competition, social influences, as well as creativity, diversity, and general openness to their experiences at the college, all of which affected their view of jazz learning. In the following chapter we identify supporting elements from the point of view of the instructors teaching at the same colleges and how they perceive these factors to be influential as educators serving their students.

# Chapter V

# TEACHER EXPERIENCES

## Introduction

The study was designed to uncover unique aspects of the learning environments of jazz students operating in an avocational setting in college. In this respect the term avocational is used to describe eager music learners who do not expect to turn their music performance skills into a professional career post college graduation. This descriptor does not relate to perceived skill level or general ability; rather using the term avocational relates only to career goals. The study focused on the learning environments of liberal arts colleges. The reason for this setting was due in part to the fact that liberal arts colleges do not traditionally offer music performance degree programs. While these institutions offer a wide range of music offerings and employ fulltime music faculty, the degrees awarded in music are not based on performance, as might be found in larger universities or music conservatories. As we found in the student experiences, most of the students attending these liberal arts colleges are pursuing other academic fields in conjunction with their music learning.

The process of gathering data from the students entailed hosting focus groups of four to eleven students from each institution visited. Data gathered from students represented the experience of learning in this environment. They discussed what their motivations are for being involved in a jazz ensemble. The focus group format was the most useful in the area of student data collection as it allowed the students to dialogue with each other as well as with the researcher, which promoted deeper conversation in a comfortable setting. To gather data from another perspective the researcher conducted one-to-one interviews with the jazz faculty at the school responsible for directing the jazz ensembles and teaching other supporting courses in the jazz program.

**College Profile**

The colleges reflected in this study represent liberal arts institutions in the Northeastern United States. The intent of the study is to uncover key aspects of the avocational experience of studying jazz in higher education. The purpose of focusing on the experiences of liberal arts students is that typically schools that identify as liberal arts colleges do not offer performance-based degree programs in music. Therefore, the typical student attending one of these colleges did so for reasons other than pursuing performance-based training most relevant to post college careers as music performers. In deciding which schools to examine, I gathered information on approximately twenty institutions in the geographic region that met key aspects for the ideal college profile for the study. Subsequently, five colleges are represented in the final study. None of the institutions visited offer performance-based degrees in any area of music. Additionally, all performance ensembles, including jazz, are available to any student enrolled at the

college. All the colleges have populations below 5,000 students and are situated in or near relatively small town communities. All the teachers except one interviewed, except one, are full-time faculty at the college and have been instructors there for a minimum of five years; the longest serving faculty had been at their institution for more than 20 years at the time of the interview.

Since the target population was aimed at liberal arts colleges in the northeast region, many of the institutions initially selected shared similar demographics and settings to one another. All of the colleges enrolled 5,000 or less students, mostly less. All were located in relatively small towns, the smallest an approximate population of 2,000 residents (the college was more populous than the surrounding town during the academic year) and the largest area 65,000 residents. None of the schools offer performance degrees in their music programs. All the institutions are private and the average full-time tuition rates were $52,000 per year. The acceptance rates of the liberal arts colleges visited, as reported on their websites, was a range of 17-38%, with an average of 26%. In comparison, the State University of New York, as reported on the SUNY website, states an average of 54% acceptance rates to the closest campus to the institutions visited in this study. The study was not intended to make student comparisons at various college programs, however, when considering the private nature of these liberal arts colleges and the lower acceptance rates to larger public colleges, students enrolled in liberal arts colleges could be characterized as high achieving and academically minded students. The small nature of the colleges, and the general profile of the average student attending these institutions, speaks to the overall dynamic of the liberal arts college. The profile of the student participants in this study is also addressed

in the form of general limitations, which should be considered in conjunction with the profile of the colleges where the investigations took place.

**Faculty Profile**

All the faculty interviewed for the study are active performers in their area and maintain a regular performance schedule outside of their teaching duties at the college. Of the six faculty interviewed for the study only one possessed a terminal degree while the remaining five faculty held master's degrees – although not all of the master's degrees were in music. All six faculty members interviewed were full-time faculty at their college, three of the six have tenure. The requirements for each faculty at their institutions varied slightly from place to place; however, each participant directed at least one ensemble in addition to at least one classroom-based course every semester. In nearly all cases, teachers would see many of the same students during the classroom-based courses as well as in the jazz ensembles, allowing for further interaction and experiences to draw on with this type of jazz student.

The research question directed to the teachers was intended to investigate any learned methods teachers might employ to engage and motivate the students to continue learning jazz when high pressure program expectations are removed from the learning environment. As the interviews unfolded several key areas emerged as shared experiences from all the teachers. These areas will be addressed as *expectations, strategies, recreational perceptions,* and *critical thinking*.

**Prof. Collins**

Prof. Collins was the first interview subject and the first person to respond to my inquiry. Our first conversation on the phone was nearly an hour and a half and he was eager to share his insights on the subjects and create a dialogue. He suggested I arrive early to the school and find him in the cafeteria where he is every morning greeting students and drinking coffee. When I arrived, I found him with two other students talking about music and making jokes. It was clear how committed he was to the community of the school. We chatted for a few minutes before walking to his office prior to his first class of the day. His office was located between the cafeteria and other classrooms and filled with sheet music, CD's, and instruments. He was pleased to show me several compositions he was working on, which were buried underneath other projects under the closest bookshelf. He described how he does not currently perform often, rather spends more time on original compositions for various sized ensembles, and different genres. It was nice to see how he incorporates his students on the performances of these original compositions, which one was coming up in a few weeks.

**Prof. Cummings**

Prof. Cummings was probably the most senior faculty member to participate in the study and in the initial states of retiring from the college. The new work-life balance was giving him more time to explore further teaching opportunities, but mostly spend time on writing and performing new music. He comes from a musical family and has children who are pursuing music professionally. He found himself at the college after a series of adjunct positions at more prestigious conservatory style music programs. He

thoroughly enjoyed teaching at these programs, both his instrument and composition, but in retrospective comparison, enjoyed his time with the liberal arts students over the course of his career. He has published a few books on concepts of jazz and is regularly exploring new ways to engage students with the music that may extend beyond the playing of jazz. The interview was one of the simpler in comparison in that Prof. Cummings has been given the topic in question a lot of thought and draws on a long career of working with avocational students. He spoke more about the state of all jazz in higher education and how it is a difficult battle to find parity with jazz and other fields at the college level. He was eager to supply information based on his experiences at the college through sample syllabi and concert footage as way of depicting the small liberal arts college environment.

**Prof. Hopkins**

Prof. Hopkins began working with Prof. Cummings at the same college as a prolonged transition to a new full-time jazz instructor when Prof. Cummings retires. It was an easy transition in that Prof. Hopkins had been teaching adjunct courses at the college for several years and was familiar with the student body he would be serving. He does not live near the school and is performing regularly in the region with his own group and as a side musician in other ensembles. He was accustomed to working with ambitious jazz students in his other teaching capacities but found the liberal arts setting to be equally stimulating in the methods he used to reach the students. When I met him at the college we had lunch at the cafeteria first to chat about the college and his overall views of jazz and the role of jazz educator. The small college environment meant that many of

the staff and students recognize him and say hello as we passed between the cafeteria and the music building. He has probably the most active performance career of all the faculty interviewed, and that became helpful when observing him in the classroom as he was ready to play just as much as the students. He enjoyed being able to demonstrate techniques on his instrument and found the students were more engage when he did that. When the class started students were very comfortable, most entering with food half eaten from the cafeteria and drinking coffee. All these small details spoke to the low-pressure environment of the classroom and probably an influence on the enjoyment levels of the students for learning challenging jazz concepts during the class time.

**Prof. Peale**

I found more information online about Prof. Peale than the other teachers, and the performance footage of her was especially helpful prior to meeting her to know more about her as a musician. It was clear to me that she was more accustomed to small group playing and more inclined to play original music than typical jazz repertoire. The music was incredibly creative, and she demonstrated so much versatility on her instrument, I was looking forward to meeting her and learning more about her as an artist at the same time as interviewing her for the scope of this study. When we met in her office there was another student coming in an out helping her to organize all the books and music scattered throughout the office. She allows for her office to be a communal space, which is where we held the student focus group after the band rehearsal when she left. Just as much as we discussed the unique liberal arts environment, she was proud to discuss the various things former students were currently pursuing, which was not just music. She

even gave me a CD of a former student with all original music. She has a quiet demeanor and calm approach to everyone she encountered in the time I was on campus, and that was apparent during the rehearsal I observed as well. She did not play during the rehearsal, rather let the students engage in a lot of dialogue as the worked through student arrangements of seemingly complicated compositions. She basically only gave input on the music when the students directly asked her, but it was clear to me that the students were following her guidelines at all times. Later in the focus group all the students discussed how they admire her work and that her support always is a significant piece to their learning and enjoyment of jazz in that program. She had been at the school for about fifteen years and through a series of adjunct appointments before converting to full-time faculty.

**Prof. Jansen**

Prof. Jansen was the only non full-time faculty member participant of the study, although he was a key member of the music faculty at his college. He did not relocate to the area to become faculty at this college, instead his wife had a job that took them there and he wanted to remain involved in teaching jazz and became associated with the music program. He is a conservatory trained musician who has recorded several albums and still performs semi-regularly with renowned musicians in the New York area. When I visited the school, he met me at the parking lot and took me on a small tour of the music building before going to the small rehearsal room for the interview, which was just before his ensemble rehearsal. The room was filled with many instruments and posters of different jazz luminaries on all the walls. Our conversation organically converted to the interview,

which at one point he asked if I should just turn on the recorder since we were discussing the topic. He, like a few other faculty interview participants, had given the subject a lot of thought since my first contact to the time we met to interview. One thing he wanted to point out to me was that he thought of himself as a personal ally to the students. He wanted to be as supportive as he could in any aspect, and the students later felt that during the focus group. He had a lot to say about conservatory jazz training, and one element he thought he brought to the avocational learning environment was the fact he had that more alternative training; he graduated from a conservatory and could speak to that world in a comparative way as the students viewed it. When the rehearsal happened, he gave incredibly direct comments to specific aspects of each student's contributions, and some equally direct tips to incorporating new concepts. Unlike other rehearsals I observed, he rarely interjected while a song was being played – he waited until the students were done before offering comments. Other instructors were more likely to cut off a group when a specific thing happened that needed to be addressed.

**Prof. Wilson**

Prof. Wilson had been at the college for nearly twenty years, and like other jazz instructors interviewed, came to the school in a part-time capacity at first. He had finished his doctoral degree and was eager to find a position in higher education, this college was the first to offer him a position and he took it. He had no idea what would be expected in the new role, but quickly discovered that what he found at the college was quite different than his expectations of what college teaching might look like. His background was in both classical and jazz studies, and he said it took him a few years

before realizing that a dual background like that gave him a lot to offer the students. He found enjoyment in writing original arrangements for the students for the unorthodox instrumentations he encountered every semester and clued his students in on the process. He lowered his pressure towards the students, which resulted in greater enjoyment for him as the instructor to relieved some of the pressure other directors might encounter in pre-professional programs. We had a relatively brief discussion at the college, and the formal interview was at his home the following morning. He was very gracious and enjoyed the opportunity to openly discuss his experiences in the college and his approach to pedagogies aimed at this unique student population. We coincidentally knew many of the same people in the area and had a fun conversation both before and after the formality of the interview.

**Expectations**

The jazz faculty recognized the uniqueness of these students and how they as teachers fit into the makeup of the whole college. As active performers they discussed how they manage their personal expectations for the students to learn jazz as well as motivators influencing the students who enter their classrooms and ensembles. A common comparison the teachers made were to their university counterparts offering performance degrees in jazz studies. We can further categorize teacher expectations into smaller areas of: *student assumptions, goals for success, jazz band as recreation,* and *general commitment level.*

**Student assumptions**. All the teachers admired the students they were serving and paired their musical expectations with general assumptions about the broader

"quality" and variety of influences weighing on every student they instructed. The professors agree these assumptions will inform how they construct their programs and develop teaching strategies. These assumptions are broad in spectrum. As the professors state:

> Going here means one of two things if you're really into jazz, which is a gross oversimplification, but it means one of two things. Well, I guess the third thing would be you're delusional, but it means one of two legitimate and clearheaded things. It either means that what you want to pursue in life is diverse enough that you want jazz to be a part of what you do but it's not going to be what you pursue vocationally, or, occasionally you are so advanced already that you have the luxury of studying in an environment like this that would be more stimulating in other ways and have some confident that you're not going to be screwed on the back end for not using those years to establish your chops. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> Anyone who passes an audition to get into my group is statistically likely to have already paid some dues and thus have some pre-existing internal motivation. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> A lot of students who are doing this because they love jazz and this is a great thing to be able to do on their way to getting their chemistry degree or their economics degree or their Spanish degree or whatever with no expectations that they will be earning money playing jazz or that it will be tangibly consequential whether they can hang on a gig. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

The instructors recognize that the personalities of the students says they endeavor to make achievements, it is normal for them to make it. The instructors, therefore, hope that characteristic transfers to their efforts with jazz.

> You do get a lot of those students and they are very high achieving and very smart. They're quick studies and they will work hard. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> There are people who are used to succeeding. They are used to working hard and knowing how to achieve at a high level. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> There's a lot more students who if you lifted them up out of here and put them at Berklee or Manhattan School of Music or William Paterson or whatever in a conservatory program would have as much raw talent with which to pursue that as

> the people who are already there but their interests are more diverse. You wouldn't come here, there are some students, not a ton, but some students who get to that crossroads in high school. It's like, "Do I go to a conservatory? Do I go here?" (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> Some people a double major in bio and music and so we've had some people come through doing that and they're pretty great musicians but by the same token they're going to go and be medical researchers or professors. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Commitment level**. The faculty recognized the fact that the students enrolled in their jazz programs are also pursuing other fields at the college, and that music was not considered to be their top priority in their academic lives at the college. While this fact was accepted among the teachers, each recognized how they need to operate in that environment and how to manage their expectations against the various levels of commitment students bring to music. The acknowledgement of lower commitment did not necessarily translate into any noticeable setback to the ensembles; rather the teachers would make concerted efforts to counter lower commitment levels throughout the semesters to maintain an enriching experience for other students in attendance.

> I think the motivation, if you view motivation to practice jazz as something that sort of is delusional, like, it has very little real-world practical value in terms of being a skill that will get you compensated. By nature, pursuing it is something that's about some higher substance, right? Again, especially here, because these are not people who think that doing this ensemble is going to get them gigs. They're doing it because they want to dig into this music and that's an important part of what they want to be able to do as humans. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> And you sort of have to accept it that you're not number one on students' priority list. Maybe there are a few students for whom you are number one priority but I would say everybody will let you down at some point in the four years. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

> We were all music majors and so when you're a music major you can be forced to do music whereas if you're an engineer or a history major, or poli-sci or whatever you're doing this again mainly you like to do it. It's something fun and

> maybe you know you're building something bigger than yourself or whatever but when that poli-sci senior thesis takes over and you disappear for two weeks. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

> I kind of wished they practiced more if that makes sense. I wish more learning took place outside of the corporate rehearsal setting…I wish they devoted more time to practicing outside of the rehearsal because that would take us to higher levels and let us play more technically challenging repertoire. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Goals for success.** In the area of what qualifies as success, the faculty made different assertions as to what they hope for the students as a result of learning jazz at the college. Success would relate to current students playing in the ensemble performing a concert, learning a new piece of music, or a historical element significant to the current practice of jazz. Success also meant to the teachers what was instilled in the students that would remain with them and a driving force for continued involvement with jazz after they graduated. Nonetheless, qualifying success in an academic environment provides a motivating factor for the teachers to reach all levels of students they serve in their programs, which as reported earlier, varies greatly within each college.

> My expectations are then in sync with what they want. What I mostly want is for them to be whole soulful humans for whom jazz is a significant part of their life and that they can continue playing it and growing with it in whatever capacity is relevant to their lives. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

They are hopeful the lessons learned through jazz will have a positive influence on the students as community members, something Prof. Cummings pointed out:

> I think just learning how to respect the music and how to understand the culture and the history of it and be a better musician and a better person and a better communitarian as a result. I think that is all you can expect. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

When it comes to recognizing the difference of their programs versus conservatory style programs, the faculty see the comparison as an ultimate positive for their students to have a "global view".

> I do worry about a lot of people coming out of those kinds of institutions who don't have a global view of what they're doing. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> Well it seems to me that this is such a hard world to survive as a musician that if you don't have a sense of your own self and who you are, you're not gonna survive. (Prof. Peale, Red Hook College)

> I said, "See?" I said, "You're not playing to get a grade in an academic scenario, you're playing for real people who are hurting inside who need to see a meaningful, intelligent, uplifting message." (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> Now let me say it to you like that by saying this, is I don't expect people to be virtuosos. I expect them to fall in love with the music and find out what's cool and what's hip about it and I expect them to allow the larger concept of jazz interpretation to effect the palate of who they are as a whole human being. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> Learning how to play this music is such an incredible lesson in how to problem solve and how to be persistent and how to really care about something and manifest that through your actions and how to be realistic with oneself about what does it mean to actually say you want to pursue something. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> Again, our talent pool is so small that we take whatever walks in the door and as I tell people try to push them further down the road. Whatever that means for them and sometimes they don't go very far down the road. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Jazz ensemble as recreation**. Considering the fact that all the ensembles from the institutions visited allow anyone from the college to participate in jazz ensemble, the jazz instructors are faced with the notion that students will treat the jazz ensemble experience as they would any recreational activity. While this perception may promote an enjoyable atmosphere for students, there exists a dilemma in how instructors can

motivate students to learn jazz on their own time when jazz ensemble resembles a once-a-week isolated experience like other recreational activities on campus.

> The ensembles are extracurricular they're not graded. They function more like sports teams really, which is interesting, but there's no grade to hold over their head. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

The faculty often struggle with activity comparisons to other academics of the colleges, which makes it hard for them to motivate the students against their other requirements.

> You want to achieve some degree of parity, at least nominally, with what's happening in the academic world. If you don't do that, it's still thought of as an extra-curricular thing. Everybody appreciates the importance of the arts, but the importance of the arts, quote-unquote, it's not nearly the same thing as academic parity and validating it with the same credit. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> The ensembles are only one quarter credit. Therefore, the ensembles are not a full credit class. Therefore, oftentimes they just don't put as much time into that as they do, let's say, their chemistry class or their biology class. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

**Post college involvement**. Everyone interviewed shared forms of hope that the students will remain active with jazz after they graduate and move on to their own lives. Some faculty assumed they will remain active performers while others were more hopeful that students would be part of an active audience supporting the music through attendance and general consumption. Nonetheless, instructors speak to the idea of post college expectations as they relate to their interactions with students while enrolled in their colleges. There is to some the notion that their service to the music is inculcating students with a passion for the music at any level to keep it relevant in their lives. Most of the areas discussed around the expectations for post-college jazz life for the students

stemmed from the passion the faculty express to their students and how jazz can remain an enriching vehicle for their lives after college.

> I hope that they'll listen to jazz, I hope that they'll still play, they'll practice their instrument that they'll find the people to play with, that they'll compose and arrange tunes and continue to learn. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

> I said now, if you want to really show me that you learned something, drop me a postcard five years later and prove to me that you didn't regurgitate and spit it out and flush. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> Out of every 10 students who I work with for two semesters or more, which is to say they don't just drop in and drop out, they commit for some period of time. Out of every 10 students, I'd be surprised if there was two who intend to play jazz professionally when they leave here. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

> I would say that they're all going to be enthusiastic audience members and that they're going to go to shows. They're going to go to clubs. They're going to go to jazz festivals as their schedule and as their money, as their budget allows it. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Engagement Strategies**

A key way to way to motivate students to study their instrument and jazz music beyond the classroom is to find ways that actively engage them during jazz classes and rehearsals. Given the variety of students and unique goals and perspectives each student brings to the liberal arts environment, the instructors noted several strategies for engaging students during their time in class. As the instructors are active jazz performers, they all shared a deep passion for their own development as musicians and transferring what they called traditional ways of learning jazz to their students. They often used the word "authentic" in describing how they learned and how they wanted to structure their programs and teaching strategies. They also spoke about a concept of service to the music; enriching these students lives with jazz will be giving back to an art form they

care deeply about. The engagement strategies that emerged in the study speak to the styles of the individual instructors and how they connect with their students. The engagement strategies will be *Learning Process, Exposure to Authentic Learning Environments,* and *Service to Music.*

**Learning process.** The jazz teachers sought to create environments that had available resources available for all the students to use at their various skill levels and paces of learning.

> That's definitely true. That's a different thing. But we facilitated their engagement with the music by providing them these systems to learn it, which are shortcuts. A theory book is a shortcut. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> It's part of what we're supposed to do, I think, is to get them appreciate that it may be harder to achieve the technical aspects of music that you want to aspire to. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> I think my main strategy again was just get these people in a room, […] Make sure they're interested, make sure they're enthusiastic. It's really hard as you say because for these people this is a diversion from I want to say what they call their real life or their career path. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Exposure to authentic learning environments.** The idea of what is an "authentic jazz learning environment" has come up often in the literature and the faculty interviews. There has not been a singular definition for what constitutes this environment; however, during the discussions with these liberal arts jazz instructors "authenticity" took the form of trying to recreate ways in which they had absorbed the processes of learning jazz. There were moments of overlap among the teachers, and the literature at times in terms of pedagogy, and in the case of activating avocational learners the exposure to these elements was a way of encouraging active and alternative modes of learning music that engage the learner in new ways. The most common strategy discussed was transcription, mostly of improvised solos directly from jazz albums. All of the teachers at some point

referenced this method but said they did not see direct impact on their students. However, the exposure to this method was enough to engage the learners in a new way of learning that was at times excited and carried with the students beyond the classroom.

> But I think that's one of the inherent dangers of pedagogue is we want to engage more people, we want to make them able to understand this stuff without requiring the same sort of gut level engagement that we had to get involved in it. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> With the liberal arts thing, there is always a dichotomy between students' aspirations, especially what they state at the beginning of the semester, and then the reality of having to do it. In principle, they love the idea of doing transcriptions because it gets them locked in with their favorite player. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> One of the things I don't want to say critiques or one of the criticisms of jazz today is that it exists in the conservatory as opposed in the olden days when it was taught on buses and at gigs and at jam sessions and stuff like that. (Prof. Wilson, Founders College)

**Service to the music.** As the conversations began with the teachers, they all acknowledged their own perceptions of serving a community that was not considered a "pre-professional" program for jazz and how they could best serve their academic communities. Once they recognized in their own way that students would not be pursuing the music with the same vigor they once did, they in a sense adjusted their mentality to other agendas inherent in their teaching environments. One inherent notion acknowledged by all the teachers was the concept of "service to the music" as a way to engage themselves in the educational processes occurring with their students. They felt it incumbent upon themselves to serve the music they hold a great deal of passion for. In other words, if they could not generate future professional musicians, then they could at least enrich an audience for the music so that it remains relevant in some capacity in their lives after college.

> I want them to understand objectively about the history of the music and not just take some simple, direct line approach. This caused this led to this led to this. I want them to understand it in a social context, in the cultural context. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> Sort of ethical questions about conservatories and sometimes it can feel like a bit of a factory or a pyramid scheme where folks are coming in for what opportunities and so that element of it where I feel like I'm here sort of serving the students in whatever way they want to interact with the music, with jazz music. That feels good. It feels good to serve jazz music in a way too. Just sort of help people in that way and maybe prepare people to appreciate it more whether or not they play it. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

Prof. Collins at Wolcott College took the issue personal in the sense he needed to defend the integrity of the music in all aspects, and that mindset extended to his ability to engage the students in something deeply passionate to him.

> That's my job because I have to defend jazz. I have to represent jazz. I have to tell people how awesome this music is, how culturally significant it is, and how incredibly talented its virtuoso stylists are. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> I'm trying to represent some of the greatest creative people whoever created sound on this earth. The sounds that human beings create is beautiful beyond anything we might ever hope to describe. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

He equally saw the equal importance of approaching jazz they way you would any other field with seriousness; it is important that he make those mutual comparisons to his students through his passionate views of the music.

> You want me to put my office on the 14th floor of your building and you cheated in architect school? Oh, so now it matters? Well, it matters to Miles. It matters to Bird. It matters to Dizz. It matters to Monk. It matters to Train and I'm not going to let you treat the music of my heroes as if it's anything less than what the surgeon has to do. That's all I'm going to say. I'm done. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

**Recreational Perceptions**

Some criteria for colleges in this study was that the department did not offer a performance degree in jazz, and that any student in the entire school can enroll in a jazz ensemble. While this expands the community to participate in an ensemble, from an instructional point of view it creates a challenge in how to manage the student perception that the jazz ensemble is one of many recreational activities on campus – rather than thought of as a regular academic course. The idea of recreation does not run counter to deep instruction offered by the teachers and expected by the students, however, some students may treat their involvement in jazz ensemble with less focus than they would other required academic courses. While the teachers endeavor to create the most enriching and musically fulfilling experiences possible, the ability to do so was at times hindered by the views of some students that jazz ensemble required less effort than other courses.

> Yeah, there's a real comparison there because when you're in an environment where music is an extra-curricular activity, the challenge is to get people engaged, especially if you have, say, a big band or a larger class, you have mostly people who aren't going to pursue it professionally, so how do you get them engaged in an authentic way without just entertaining them or being part of that sphere of their lives? (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> Sometimes they are double majors or triple majors. They're just in other activities that they're really impassioned about. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> Music you can't do without preparing and actually putting in some time on an instrument or on the arrangement or whatever it is. I think that they find it more difficult to achieve musically what they can achieve intellectually in a normal framework of, say, a physics class or whatever it might be. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> The ensembles are extracurricular; they're not graded. They function more like sports teams really, which is interesting, but there's no grade to hold over their head. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

**Critical Thinking**

A common theme from the teacher interviews were ways in which they could engage the students in critical thinking with jazz music, whether that pathway be through historical elements and lessons or composing and arranging their own music for the ensembles. The notion to engage in critical thinking was something all the teachers attributed to the ethos of studying at a liberal arts college, that all subjects had a component of original work and critical thought. Therefore, the jazz teachers at the same schools would find ways to encourage students to approach learning jazz with the same mindset as a motivational and engagement tool for jazz.

> They're not looking at music to provide a full-time living for them. They still want to be able to play because I think they're deliciously intoxicated by the autonomy of creating their own sound, their own chord progressions, their own riffs. They don't want to give that up and I don't blame them. Yet, on a larger scale we cannot forget, academia cannot forget that music carries with it tremendous historical statement. You can't imagine a civil rights period without its commensurate music. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> But I think that pushes them forward. Now there are some who have really excelled compositionally and not as much on their instrument. (Prof. Peale, Red Hook College)

> But what they have to do, they have to compose, I call them etudes, but that word has been problematic so I'm trying to phase it out. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

> You running me off with all that super-imposed and all that dry stuff over top of me. You're scaring me away. You won't let it live. Won't let me express myself. Then when I do express myself then you act like I don't have any of 40 techniques or I don't really understand what I'm doing. I understand on a whole another level in a whole another way. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> Here's a thing that I find really interesting. There are senior recitals that I've seen here that are, not necessarily better, but way more ambitious than anything I've ever seen from an undergrad senior recital in a conservatory. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

**Assessment.** The act of engaging in critical thinking at multiple levels can take many forms; original music, self-assessment, and what it means to put appropriate effort into the learning.

> One of the workarounds I had once was, before a final test or a final evaluation, I asked them to just write a paragraph about what grade they deserved. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> I would have them of course learn a blues, and then I would have them write one. As a composer, I feel very strongly that composition is just improvisation in slow motion. If you've been on the bandstand and if you've learned those mechanics and how things work and the interaction between players, all you're doing, all Duke Ellington was doing, or anybody else, was observing it and institutionalizing or codifying, if you will, things that happen in an improvised way. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

> I want them to listen to themselves a lot and sort of take ownership and think about the things they learn won't replace the things they already do, but it's just going to develop organically. (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College)

For some it is as simple as demonstrating real effort in engaging with the music and the process to perform it. That means showing up and giving directed effort at improving your skills with the music, that much alone qualifies positive assessment for the faculty. "If you'll properly engage with the music, you won't have a problem at all with me getting an A in this class" (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College).

> I don't like nothing dry. I don't like nothing milk toast. I don't like nothing apologetic. I don't like mental assent. I like effort. You give me effort, I'm not expecting you to be the greatest there is. You give me any kind of effort, are you going to fail? Am I going to give you a failing grade? Come on. (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College)

> But the assessment is really like, are you showing up, do you have a good attitude, are you doing what is asked of you and being persistent with it. (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College)

## Conclusion

While the student perceptions reported in the previous chapter offer insight into the learning environment from the lens of the learner, the teacher interviews offered a parallel view of these environments from those charged with creating an engaging and enriching experience for their students. The teachers interviewed for this study reported on their years of experience working in this unique environment and areas in which they found to be most useful and beneficial to their students and how they functionally operate as educators. Their views begin with basic assumptions they have about their students prior to enrolling in the college, all the way through engagement strategies instructors found most effective in reaching the avocational population of jazz learners at liberal arts colleges. All of the faculty participating in this study are accomplished musicians themselves and inform some of their teaching strategies with their own experiences learning the music to better engage the students populating this special environment. The teachers are also aware that they are working within a certain ethos of a liberal arts institution and adjust the jazz experience to fit that paradigm. In the next chapter we discuss areas of overlap among the themes reported independently from the teachers and students. For example, the faculty assert the importance for their students to engage in critical thinking in the jazz learning process – something also reported as a key component to the liberal arts experience – to which the students acknowledged the opportunity to compose new music is a way to think critically about the music they endeavor to create in the ensembles.

# Chapter VI

# DISCUSSION

## Introduction

This study was designed to investigate the experiences of students learning to play jazz in avocational settings, in particular college programs that do not offer performances degrees in music. The purpose of investigating this phenomenon at the college level was to learn about the experiences from the perspectives of the faculty and students in the hopes of identifying pedagogical strategies most effective for this population of learners. Throughout the study several key findings emerged that may prove useful for instructors as well as students to better understand the atmosphere of learning jazz in an avocational environment.

The data were collected through student focus groups and corresponding instructors at five liberal arts colleges in the northeast region. Liberal arts colleges were the focus of the study due to the fact that liberal arts institutions typically do not offer a performance degree in music. Once the colleges were selected, I visited each to conduct a one-on-one interview with the primary jazz faculty and conduct a focus group with students who volunteered from the same institution. During these visits I was also able to observe a rehearsal or jazz class prior to the interview or focus group. While this

experience was not part of the data collection, it proved useful in observing the interactions between the students and faculty and allowing the students to see and meet me prior to the focus group.

After the data was collected from a total of six instructors and 49 students the transcripts were analyzed and reported in Chapters IV and V. Throughout the analysis and discussion, emergent themes are presented that I hope will be especially suited to understanding the unique learning environment of avocational jazz students. These results are now viewed against the original research questions in an attempt to produce new data specific to this population and pedagogical outlook for jazz in higher education.

1. How are students motivated to learn and develop skills in a jazz program as non pre-professional music students?
2. What expectations do students have for a non-major jazz programs offered at their liberal arts college?
3. How can educators in this environment motivate and engage jazz learners with perceived atypical performance outcomes and expectations? What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community?

The key findings addressed in this chapter will attempt to answer these research questions from the point of view of the student, the teacher, as well as the shared interests of this learning community. The key findings will be discussed as they emerged from the faculty interviews and student focus groups separately, as well as the overlap of themes uncovered from both perspectives. An important element to understanding the student perspective is to view their responses from the lens of how they perceive themselves to

be motivated and engaged in the jazz context, which to the students extended to the holistic college experience.

## Students

### Social outlet (key finding # 1)

Throughout the focus group discussions with students, they often described in many ways the importance of jazz ensembles as a social outlet for them. In describing this mentality, the students would recognize the significant importance of jazz as part of their college experience, but in doing so acknowledge that it represented a different avenue than their academic pursuits: "I just need music to stress relief, to keep me sane, to have an outlet" (Carlos, Founders College); "I've always done jazz as just a way to socialize" (Calvin, Roxbury College). The social element keeps intact a structure which allows students to fully realize the value of the experience.

> I think it's been a little more, it's still causal as in the fun parts of it are still there, it's not as focused as I used to be and not like practicing three hours a day but it's still fun to do. And it's casual but at the same time there's a level of professionalism in it that I still enjoy a lot. (Jack, Wolcott College)

Nicholas, also from Wolcott College, added, "I think music, and practice for me is a stress reliever more than anything." To come to jazz ensemble is a sense of joy. "I really like playing saxophone, and I really love playing jazz with other people. It's really fun for me" (Sean, Roxbury College). All the students maintain an individual approach to music and their overall education at the schools, the jazz ensemble represents a shared experience that brings fulfillment and enjoyment to the weekly process itself.

> It's something I've liked a lot, and that I do, because I like the people, and I like the feeling of spending time playing, and I've met some of my best friends playing jazz, and it's where I like to be. (Natalie, Wolcott College)

There are several ways to assess the social element in learning music in recreational college settings, and in terms of understanding these extracurricular origins we can underscore the findings gathered from the student perceptions to the area of expectancy value and, fundamentally, intrinsic motivation. We know from this theory that someone approaches an activity because they consider it an important part of their life (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). In one model, the *attainment value* explains how important it is to a student to do well on a task and simply enjoy playing music and how this connects to *intrinsic motivation* (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002, pg. 32). The practice of learning music in a social setting speaks to this special intrinsic motivation to engage in activities perceived as enjoyable. In the case of a jazz ensemble, the enjoyment could be perceived by the students in two ways; the structured weekly social element, and the hands-on playing of their instruments. The students enjoy their instruments and the social factor that comes with volunteering their time to play on a regular basis with like-minded peers in a comparatively low-stakes environment. The motivations of the students are intrinsically affected by, "how much control they have over their learning activities" (Stipek, 1998, p. 99).

The students spoke of excitement in rehearsals and sense these internal motivators being activated in a positive way. That positive atmosphere could have been generated by the environment created by the instructor to host a balance of challenges in order to maintain the ideal amount of motivation from the students (Stipek, 1998). The students in this jazz learning community did not report that external rewards were a factor to

progressing their scales and maintaining a level of motivation to stay in the groups, which speaks to the intrinsic motivation already present.

The enjoyment of playing in jazz ensembles also speaks to the students' ability to feel, "that he or she is in control of the situation" (Asmus, 1994, p. 12). The fact that students elect to give their time and offer input to the music of the groups and rehearsals enhances their enjoyment with the theory of *self-determination*. When the students are feeling a sense of control, other positive outcomes are produced, such as creativity, which was another key finding to be assessed.

**Exercising creativity (key finding # 2)**

In addition to finding a social outlet in their college experiences, the students needed an outlet to exercise their creativity as well, which speaks to the importance of critical thinking in the academic designs of liberal arts institutions. The jazz ensembles provided the students an opportunity to inject their own creative ideas through original composition and arrangements for their ensemble. Since these elements of composition and arrangement could not typically happen during the rehearsal, they provided motivation for students to engage in practicing jazz outside of the weekly sessions and feel the rewards of their efforts during the rehearsals:

> I feel like, for me, a lot of the learning I've done is on the line of trying to use the conceptualizing as a motivation for me to make the individual effort, to make sure that I can bring all those more abstract ideas to fruition by doing the less idealistic liberal arts stuff. (Emily, Roxbury College)

In describing these elements, the students also took the opportunity to make comparisons to typical conservatory or schools of music in which they felt they could not be as free to

pursue their values of jazz. “I feel like I get more creativity envy than chops envy” (Aaron, Red Hook College). Sebastian from Roxbury College added,

> There are great people here to do that, because a lot of times conservatories are in cities with access to a lot of people who play jazz music. You can really get a lot of input, and you also have a ton of other equally driven musicians who can push you, and you can ask them how you sound and stuff like that.

Ryan from the same school added, “I do think that there are things that I’ve come across here that I don’t think that I would have come across in a conservatory.” A liberal arts education provides subscribes a more well-rounded education that speaks to the meanings of music as opposed to the techniques that made it possible. Environment allows for, “not just being able to play fast and cool things, but then also coming up with the coolest concepts behind the scenes of that” (Steve, Roxbury College). These schools provided the right balance between academics and music:

> I think that had I gone to a conservatory where it was competitive and where my grades were all about how much I practiced and how well I was doing or comparing me to other people who were doing better, I think that that would really have burnt me out on music. (Calvin, Roxbury College)

To some the technical practicing means generating the tools you need to express yourself in an artistic way. Therefore, according to the students, in order to have ideas worth expressing, they needed to engage in as many other interests as possible to have something worth expressing. “I’m saying you need to have things to play about. That’s interesting” (Greg, Roxbury College). The nature of liberal arts schools provides a multi-faceted mode of learning that suits these students in their musical capacities and interests as well:

> I agree with a lot of what everybody has been saying. The more you practice, the more tools you have to express yourself, and being at a liberal arts school means having more experiences linked to whatever political, social, cultural issues are at hand that give you a reason to want to express yourself, rather than

> just being able to play notes correctly. I think that's really valuable. (Emily, Roxbury College)

The ability to exercise creativity came in several forms for the students, primarily in the act of playing improvised music as well as contributing original songs and arrangements in many cases. The ability to express themselves in this forma and having a regular outlet for it at college is important to their overall experience of learning when typical performance pressures are not part of the program designs they attend. We may understand this phenomenon better through the lens of "flow," a state that matches the challenges of the activities to the skills of the participant (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 90). Playing music is challenging and students entering liberal arts colleges and continuing to play music are best supported when the perceived challenged is within the realm of their ability to succeed. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi also stress "immediate feedback" as essential to the flow state, and accordingly, instructors supply high quality and timely feedback (p. 90).

While the students are enjoying the act of playing music, and they perform a concert at some point in the term, they are not approaching the activity with the expectation of striving for a concert beyond their skillset in order to achieve an outcome reminiscent of one expected in a typical music performance program. That shift in expectant achievement supports the motivation produced in the flow state. When a student is in the flow state they enjoy the activity with less focus towards the expected outcome and feel, "a high level of intrinsic enjoyment" (Wrigley & Emmerson, 2011, p. 293). The flow state cannot be forced; the instructor cannot directly put their students into this powerful state. The students can find themselves in flow, "spontaneously or by chance from engagement in structured activities" (Wrigley & Emmerson, 2011, p. 293).

The structure of meeting weekly to enjoy the process of making jazz music provides ample opportunities to enter the flow state and develop intrinsic motivation to continue learning and practicing jazz. The responsibility of the instructor then is to identify material for the ensembles that speaks to their skill levels that will most likely allow them to achieve the flow state. If the music is too simple, then the students will be bored and lose engagement. If the music is too challenging and beyond their current capabilities, then they will become frustrated and lose the enjoyment factor. The instructor has the opportunity to recognize this and supply material for the ensemble that matches their skills with the music.

**Peer Motivators (key finding # 3)**

The students often acknowledged the community element to learning, whether in the form of social outlet as previously assessed, or as a healthy form of competition among peers. More importantly they have a, "collaborative experience" (David, Roxbury College). "I'm loving the community and had a lot of musical experiences" (Ryan, Roxbury College). Nonetheless, some form of community competition contributed to the students' motivation to learn and develop skills for playing in the jazz ensemble. "Getting to play with people is exciting" (Kelly, Worthington College). What is especially crucial to this unique form of competition is that the students share similar interests, which translates to them as healthy support rather than direct competition that might be found in more performance-driven programs: "I've come out of our meetings and been really motivated to practice jazz" (Kevin, Wolcott College).

Competition serves as inspiration for other students to learn and grow more on their own to achieve a personal sense of satisfaction: “There aren’t that many more people pursuing music on a technical level in terms of technical ability, there are a lot of people approaching music with a lot of creativity. That’s really inspiring to be around” (Ryan, Roxbury College). Conservatory comparison means that the students attend those institutions understand they must adhere to a severe practice schedule; however, at a liberal arts college and avocational jazz learning environment students are encouraged to explore alternative influences that speak to their unique personalities.

The students acknowledge the achievements of their peers and using that recognition as launching points for their own motivation to achieve or try more with music: “It’s something extra that people throw so much of themselves into, which is obviously something that doesn’t make me want to compete with them, but it makes you want to match them. It makes you want to push yourself to that same limit” (Ryan, Roxbury College). Competition as motivation means, “I just listen to all these people playing something that I can’t help but want to be able to do that and to be able to play like that and sort of steal their licks and use them and it’s just really exciting to do that” (Tristan, Worthington College). Sean from Roxbury College adds,

> What I would say about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is that while intrinsic motivation obviously needs to come from myself, I also think that being around other people that are intrinsically motivated can elevate your intrinsic motivation.

The shared experience extends beyond the weekly rehearsals, and the students seem to understand how their peers approach the overall experience of jazz and music at the college. “There’s something about this community and the comradery that makes practicing almost inherently more social, or more rewarding in that it becomes a point of

shared experience" (Emily, Roxbury College). The mutual understanding creates an undercurrent of supportive competition that drives the students throughout the week and during the rehearsals. "I feel like this is a place where people are free to collaborate, play together. You're still getting pushed. You're still getting challenged" (Sean, Roxbury College).

As it was addressed in Chapter II, the findings of competition and peer motivators directly speaks to theories of social comparison. Students engaged in simultaneous activities will make comparisons to each other (Asmus, 1994, pg. 14). The theory of social comparison underscores that these large group interactions can cause varied motivations depending on the environment. Fundamentally, competitive structures produce a negative impact on intrinsic motivation while collaborative environments have a positive influence (Asmus, 1994). The students reported the enjoyment of being surrounded by likeminded students – students avocationally involved in music and deeply pursuing other academic interests in college, but who still value the opportunity to continue studying music. The study did not look to identify what would qualify as "success" for these students in the area of jazz performance, but we see that their value of the activity speaks to their motivation to practice than any belief that have in their ability to succeed (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002).

**Value of diverse learning (key finding # 4)**

The idea around what is "diverse learning" took many shapes in the discussions with the students; therefore, the uniqueness of liberal arts colleges speaks to this need for variety in many capacities. A significant draw for these students to attend these

institutions was their ability to experience a multitude of learning experiences and academic subjects depending on their individual interests rather than a more seemingly goal-oriented program commonly found in other university or conservatory programs. “The ability to do a little bit of everything or do a lot of everything is just, it’s awesome. I love it” (Jose, Founders College). Most of the students understood this to be true prior to entering college at all. “I chose to come to Roxbury because I wanted to have a balance of both music and academics” (Ryan, Roxbury College).

Exploring variety also meant that the students did not have to make concrete choices in virtually any facet of their academic careers, which extended to their ability to remain involved in jazz ensemble. The students were proud of their “indecisive” natures and especially how that related to their time at the select colleges. “I actually am an interdisciplinary major so essentially I couldn’t make my mind up and I created my own major. So the indecisiveness is like a big part of my life” (Stephanie, Wolcott College).

When a student can exercise variety in choosing their overall educational agenda, their intrinsic motivation is further activated. “Intrinsic motivation is enhanced when an individual feels that he or she is in control of a situation” (Asmus, 1994, p. 12). Each of the colleges supported the students’ ability to choose a diverse course of study and encouraged students to explore as many avenues as possible during their time in college. The general experience of a liberal arts institution provides, “a greater sense of choice, actions which are self-initiated, and encourage personal responsibility” (p. 12). Jazz ensembles at all of the schools meet once per week and are referred to as extracurricular as often as curricular. The students exercise a lot of control over their schedules and interests at the school, which extends to their involvement in jazz ensembles when, “their

intrinsic motivations are affected by how much control they have over their learning activities" (Stipek, 1998, p. 99).

## Teachers

### Jazz Ensemble as Recreation (key finding # 1)

All of the faculty expressed frustrations in the way ensemble is perceived by the students and more so by their fellow faculty members in the music department and extending all the way through the university atmosphere. While they accepted this trend, they continually discussed ways they are in conflict with the jazz ensemble experience being entirely thought of as a recreational activity and not necessarily one that warranted academic parity with other courses in the university and even the music department. They seem to understand that the undertone to the jazz ensemble is one of enjoyment, and therefore it is important to recognize that and build on that student enthusiasm for music to a place of deeper learning. "When you're in an environment where music is an extra-curricular activity, the challenge is to get people engaged" (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College). The instructors find themselves in a sense defending the important of music learning on the campus, "everybody appreciates the importance of the arts, but the importance of the arts, quote-unquote, it's not nearly the same thing as academic parity and validating it with the same credit" (Prof. Winer, Worthington College). Defining the role of jazz ensembles and importance to overall academic integrity extends to the student perceptions as well as how the instructors can motivate and engage students to treat jazz with a comparable degree of importance and preparation as they might their

other academic courses. “I think that they find it more difficult to achieve musically what they can achieve intellectually in a normal framework of, say, a physics class or whatever it might be” (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College).

The view of jazz ensembles as the instructors perceive it might be best viewed through the theory of expectancy-value for the students. The students elect to join the jazz ensembles voluntarily – they are not attending the colleges to earn degrees in music performance – which means they hold a value to the experience, most typically reported as a continuation of their jazz ensemble experience from high school. The expectancy-value theory tells us that individuals’ choice and persistence can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, pg. 71). Students made a choice to join the jazz ensemble after enrolling in the college, and advanced that choice with their persistence in attending weekly rehearsals and end-of-term concerts during the school year. While the students may or may not regard jazz ensemble on the same level as their other academic course loads, they values the experience enough to make it part of their weekly responsibilities and attend sessions and practice their instruments in preparation for rehearsals as often as time allows.

**Level of Commitment (key finding # 2)**

The faculty acknowledged that it is hard to understand and articulate the commitment level of their jazz students. They understand the students to be well-rounded and intelligent college students pursuing rigorous academic programs and therefore hold an understanding of what is required of a member in the jazz ensemble. However, the teachers found it important for students to understand how they prioritize their jazz

learning experiences. Furthermore, the students witnessed how others bring varying levels of commitment to the same ensemble setting. “They’re doing it because they want to dig into this music and that’s an important part of what they want to be able to do as humans” (Prof. Jansen, Roxbury College). The students consider the jazz ensemble experience important, but not as their first priority in college and the teachers report their own need to be aware of their motivation from their students. The jazz instructors have to, “sort of have to accept it that you’re not number one on students’ priority list” (Prof. Wilson, Founders College). Not being number on a student’s list of academic priorities does not mean the student views the learning of jazz as not important; rather it is a representation of a different experience they value overall in college.

Articulating the commitment level from students might best be viewed through a combined lens of attainment value within the *expectancy-value theory* and *self-efficacy*, similar to what was uncovered during the student focus groups. The ensembles are not graded, although in all cases credit is award for participation; therefore, students do perform in the class for the purposes of earning a high grade similar to other grading systems in the college. But this does not mean that students do not wish to do well on all of the activities they elect, including jazz ensembles: “Valuing a musical activity may be even more important in sustaining motivation” (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002, p. 34). Participating in regular jazz ensembles in this case is not representative of future successes in the field; rather the students are demonstrating the value they find in the process of playing jazz music. The levels to which students commit to advancing their skills remains an unknown factor to the instructors in this environment and the instructors

are seeing varying degrees of perceived commitment to learning jazz skills in an ensemble.

**Engagement Strategies (key finding # 3)**

The focus of this study was to uncover areas of engagement to avocational jazz students in higher education, including any strategies seasoned jazz instructors found effective in this unique environment of jazz learning. In the previous chapter I outlined three areas of engagement the instructors found effective for their students; learning process, authentic learning environments, and their own service to the music. In terms of learning process, the instructors are the key movers in creating an environment that, "facilitated their engagement with the music by providing them these systems to learn it" (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College). The students have a regular outlet in which to exercise an important aspect of their lives – playing jazz music. The instructors understand that to be the responsibility of the instructor to provide space in which the students can expect to activate their musical lives on a regular basis. The process of learning jazz has, obviously, been at the core of jazz education designs since its formal introduction in higher education in the 1940s, along with the notion that jazz education, "should be using the great works of the past to help train the music's future performers" (Williams and Richards, 1988, p. 1). The process for learning jazz, at any level, is informed through this basic tenet of learning from past performers as a way to grow future players of the music.

The concept of *exposure to authentic learning environments* was fascinating in that it related directly to how the instructors learned jazz at a similar age as their current

students, which they perceived to be a vastly different experience than the one they are providing their avocational jazz students. For example, all of the instructors mentioned at one point the importance of transcribing music directly from recordings of well-known jazz artists – a process that is labor intensive and challenging. The teachers acknowledged that this process is a key exercise for anyone endeavoring to advance their skills as a jazz musician. However, the process is challenging and time consuming; therefore, as a strategy for their current students the instructors recognized this exercise as motivating for their students but had limited expectations for the students to complete a transcription of their own.

> There is always a dichotomy between students' aspirations, especially what they state at the beginning of the semester, and then the reality of having to do it. In principle, they love the idea of doing transcriptions because it gets them locked in with their favorite player. (Prof. Cummings, Worthington College)

But the instructors understand that while the enthusiasm might be there at first, the motivation to carry it out beyond the time of the weekly jazz sessions is much less likely. Therefore, exposing the students to this particular form of jazz practicing served as an in-the-moment tool to engage the students, and it was, for all intents and purposes, lost when the students were not directly engaging with the faculty.

As an extension of authentic learning environments, we start to discover a special motivation for the instructors, that is, service to the music. All the instructors are active and professional musicians who have spent a great deal of time developing their skills and in doing so supported their passion for the music. In the avocational environment they can offer their students a sense of that passion as they are effectively passing on the traditions of the music that enriched their lives; it is a fulfilling state. "It is something that I love that's given me a lot of goodness throughout my life and so yeah I want to the

extent that I can give back to jazz" (Prof. Hopkins, Worthington College). The teachers might recognize that the avocational setting might diminish the seriousness with which they approached learning jazz prior to becoming educators. In one sense they serve a dual role, one that is the primary jazz educator to the students and the other as ambassador of the music to the overall college environment: "That's my job because I have to defend jazz. I have to represent jazz. I have to tell people how awesome this music is, how culturally significant it is, and how incredibly talented its virtuosos stylists are" (Prof. Collins, Wolcott College). These motivations offer an extension of those operating within the student population as well, and in terms of how the educators enter the avocational environment, we see how the attainment value theory is prevalent among the instructors – "expectancies for success and the value they have for succeeding are important determinants of […] motivation" (Wigfield, 1994, p. 50).

**Critical Thinking (key finding # 4)**

A key component of a liberal arts education – and by extension that of the avocational jazz learner for the purposes of this study – is that students are actively engaged in "critical thinking" at nearly all levels of their college education. Students are encouraged to investigate further the inner workings of everything they encounter during their academic careers and jazz ensemble is no exception. The instructors as members of the college faculty are aware of this element and reflect on how it can be an active component of the jazz experience and leads to deeper engagement with the music. Critical thinking takes the form of original composition and arrangement for the jazz ensembles, which became a motivational and engagement tool in the jazz programs. "I

think really starting this composition thing, I think really made a huge difference" (Prof. Peale, Red Hook College). Creating and arranging original music represents an outlet in the jazz idiom that, in a sense, does not require advanced instrumental skills, rather affording an opportunity for students to critically evaluate their musical interests and produce new material: "I think that pushes them forward. Now there are some who have really excelled compositionally and not as much on their instrument" (Prof. Peale, Red Hook College).

The liberal arts environment supports active investigation of material addressed in courses, and, in the case of jazz ensembles, what is produced and expressed by the students through the music they make. The students recognized during their focus groups that technical demands on their instruments are not an exclusionary factor to their experience; rather composition was an outlet to musically express themselves in the ways they deem most appropriate. The instructors have an opportunity to capitalize on this sentiment in how they establish the programs to promote such awareness among the students to find ways to express themselves. As Emily from Roxbury College articulated,

> The more you practice, the more tools you have to express yourself, and being at a liberal arts school means having more experiences linked to whatever political, social, cultural issues are at hand that give you a reason to want to express yourself, rather than just being able to play notes correctly. I think that's really valuable.

Greg, from the same institution, adds, "in order to be a good, like a really good musician…you need to have something to play about to make good music…I'm saying you need to have things to play about." The instructors are in a special position to provide an environment – a motivational atmosphere – that encourages that view of music-making, which speaks to the overall mission of attaining a liberal arts education.

## Conclusion

The reported findings from the perspective of the students and the teachers operating in avocational jazz settings offers us a better insight into the world of learning jazz in this unique environment. The themes that emerged, viewed against traditional professional-minded trends of jazz education and that of motivational theories, help explain how learners in this environment are motivated to continue learning despite the perceived pressures of pursuing professional status often found in other educational settings. The students offer a variety of important factors ranging from the social element to the motivational influence of their peers. On the other hand, the instructors, who have been functioning in the avocational environment for much longer than the students, offer us insight into the commitment level of the students. They also describe how they strategize to maximize the engagement level of their students and motivate them to remain active and progressing as players of jazz music. In the following chapter the discussion will advance to areas in which further research will hopefully shed light on methods and best practices for educators to utilize in an environment populated by avocational jazz learners.

# Chapter VII

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was intended to investigate the unique educational environment of avocational jazz learners. The design of the study was driven with the goal of learning what motivates and engages jazz learners who are functioning in an atmosphere void of typical pressures found in high-pressure, pre-professional performance programs in higher education. The removal of these typical pressures allows for a special mode of educating a population of jazz players with a different set of motivations. I found in reviewing literature related to jazz pedagogies, little is dedicated to the avocational learner and rather it is focused almost entirely on developing the next generation of professional performing jazz musicians. There is a problematic lack of research on learners with alternative motivations for continued growth in music performance.

The study focused on the jazz student population in the liberal arts environment, one which generally does not offer highly specialized or degree awarding programs in music performance. Utilizing this population of teachers and students allowed for the research to uncover aspects of these programs found to be motivating and actively

engaging for the learners as well as the jazz faculty tasked with offering these unique jazz programs.

Data were gathered from five liberal arts institutions in the northeast including six jazz faculty members in one-on-one interviews combined with six students focus groups for a total of 49 student participants. The individual interview format with the teachers allowed for in-depth conversations about their experiences teaching in the liberal arts environment and observations about what they perceive to motivate and engage their students for continued learning. The focus groups were designed to encourage dialogue among the students addressing the same questions around their experiences as active learners in this environment and what motivates them to grow as musicians while pursuing other academic fields in college. Interview and focus group protocols were developed and questions generated based on the research questions of the study.

The results of these interviews and focus groups were addressed against the available literature in the field to outline emergent themes worthy of analysis and further investigation. The data pointed to important elements in the learning experience and how an educator might best teach and develop their programs to support deeper learning of jazz music for a population that approaches the music with a wide variety of influences, goals, and ambitions. The study started out with several potential motivational theories potentially at work within these environments, however, at the conclusion of the study it was discovered that not all of motivational theories were as active as initially thought. The four main theories outlined at the start of the study were *expectancy-value, self-efficacy, flow theory*, and *attribution theory*. After analysis of the data gathered in the previous chapter, the study uncovered the *expectancy-value*, *self-efficacy*, and *flow theory*

to be most useful in the explanation of the experiences of avocational jazz students. On the other hand, however, the analyzed data also indicated that *attribution theory* to not be as influential on the lived experiences of avocational music students in the jazz setting.

**Limitations**

The study aimed to uncover elements active in the learning environments of avocational music students in a jazz setting. In doing so, I utilized the liberal arts college environment as the main setting to recruit participants. The liberal arts setting was valuable in that students at these institutions are not pursuing music degrees, and any student at the college is permitted to enroll in ensemble regardless of their declared majors. While these participants represent a good representation of the avocational learner – and instructors – students from these institutions do not represent the totality of what could be identified as an avocational jazz learner. Furthermore, the institutions represented have high academic standards for admission and graduation, as well as all are private institutions. The students reported high levels of varied interests – academic and otherwise – as part of their reasons for attending a liberal arts college. However, that information does not imply the students lack academic or musical focus or ability. This study was designed to illuminate some of the motivational constructs of students operating in avocational jazz settings, however, the results are limited considering the population utilized for this specific study. The results, analysis and the discussion would likely be quite different had the data been gathered from a different environment, for example, a local community college. It is helpful when considering the included analysis

and discussion the inherent limitations corresponding to the specific institutions in which data was gathered.

## Conclusions

The study began with three guiding research questions:

1. How are students motivated to learn and develop skills in a jazz program as a non pre-professional music students?
2. What expectations do students have for a non-major jazz programs offered at their liberal arts college?
3. How can educators in this environment motivate and engage jazz learners with perceived atypical performance outcomes and expectations? What role does the teacher have in this avocational jazz community?

### Research Question 1

The question of "how" students are motivated to learn and develop skills took shape in the form of "what" they find motivating about their experiences in these programs. A review of student commentary revealed that primary motivations had to do with the social setting and musical challenges of the jazz ensemble rather than an educator explicitly detailing why they should be playing jazz. The students reported a high level of enjoyment for being afforded an opportunity to play in a jazz setting on a weekly basis; this alone provided some motivation to remain active on their instruments to be prepared for these ensemble settings. Furthermore, the social element to these weekly meetings spoke to the enjoyment factor as well to encourage students to spend

time on their own preparing for weekly rehearsals. The students enjoyed the presence of like-minded students playing jazz; that is, peers who are pursuing other academic fields at the college but dedicating time every week to exercise their passion for playing jazz. The students brought a wide range of level and interests to these groups and acknowledged how this regular interaction was a motivating factor in continuing to develop skills in jazz.

Furthermore, the students found the opportunity activate their creativity, a significant motivating factor. The students were much less concerned with developing highly technical skills on their instruments and rather focused their time on developing an intellectual and expressive side to their experiences in jazz ensemble. The ability to think critically and creatively about their involvement in jazz became a significant motivator in learning jazz in this environment. The students associated high pressure environments to a highly technical side to music, which to them represented a model unappealing and therefore demotivating for continued pursuit. The overall liberal arts atmosphere supported this view as Emily from Roxbury College stated so clearly,

> Being at a liberal arts school means having more experiences linked to whatever political, social, cultural issues are at hand that give you a reason to want to express yourself, rather than just being able to play notes correctly. I think that's really valuable.

The students also spoke highly of the motivation they find from being around their peers, who share similar experiences. They were strongly supportive of each other's interests in music and fond of being part of that shared creative process. When a student witnessed another student doing something they enjoyed, it motivated them to do something similar, whether that be practicing something specific on the instrument or writing a new song in a similar vein. The supportive atmosphere of these environments

provided ample and inherent opportunities for the students to motivate themselves to grow and develop as jazz musicians at their own pace and desired level.

**Research Question 2**

The students discussed a variation in expectations for their experiences in the liberal arts colleges, one coming from a continuation of their high school experiences and the other simply holding no expectations for what learning jazz in college would be like. However, despite not holding specific expectations for their jazz learning or involvement in the music, these students still had an expectation to be involved in jazz somehow. The students chose to attend a liberal arts institution to be involved in a wide variety of learning experiences, not necessarily specialized. The students did not want to make clear decisions about their future, academic or musical, and the liberal arts school fit that mode of education for them. As Stephanie from Wolcott College summarizes for this general mentality, “indecisiveness is like a big part of my life” while other students chose the liberal arts college for “a balance of both music and academics” (Ryan, Roxbury College). All of the students expected to remain involved in jazz in some capacity after graduating, although, in support of their current motivations, they are not clear as to what that involvement could be once the structure of college is no longer available.

**Research Question 3**

One common element to this question was the recognition among the participating instructors that the motivations for their jazz students to learn jazz is fragile in terms of applying pressure to perform. The students reported that pressurized situations

demotivated them to continue playing jazz; therefore, the instructors' recognition of this phenomenon was crucial in their ability to develop an environment that would support a wide range of desires and motivations to support the students' unique ambitions for playing jazz. The instructors had to create a balance of perceived challenges that matched the abilities of their students; in a sense, they were trying to create a state of flow that motivated their students to be there without discouraging them with music too challenging to play or imposing high expectations for performance outcomes. They also ensured the process was not a boring exercise beneath the abilities of the general population of jazz ensemble students. The teachers found this to be a challenge as well as a necessary component to building their programs.

The teacher plays a vital role in the lives of the jazz students. All the students acknowledged a relatively strong connection to the jazz instructor at their school. The instructor represented a combination of musical inspiration, advocacy, and friendship, all of which contributed to forming a collective jazz community on campus. The students held a great deal of respect for their instructors, and this seemed to stem from the instructors' ability to create an environment conducive a wide range of attitudes and motivations. In terms of the engagement aspect, the teacher was the primary source of real-time engagement during the weekly jazz sessions. The students find the peer environment to be motivating, but in terms of the way in which repertoire is selected and instruction delivered, the teacher was the source of engagement. The teachers recognized this from positive responses from their students. The teachers also asserted their passionate approach to the music and dedication to supporting jazz learners as a key factor in engaging their students on a regular basis, which in turn translated into

motivating moments for the students to grow and learn. The teacher represented the leader of the jazz community that all students could rely on for information and comradery in the process of learning jazz at their desired level.

**Recommendations and future research**

Through this study we learned about the inner workings of jazz education active in avocational learning environments, in this case liberal arts colleges. Before direct pedagogies can be generated, an understanding of the elements that motivate and engage these learners to persist with jazz despite prioritizing other academic pursuits is needed to best serve the population of avocational learners. While investigating this phenomenon as it takes place in higher education, results might also be used to benefit learners not enrolled in colleges who wish to pursue learning jazz performance in seemingly low-stakes environments. The study was also intended to provide a foundation for jazz educators finding themselves in this environment in need of tools to successful educate this special type of learner.

**Best Practices**

The key findings suggest an evolution of pedagogical practices. We learned from the students that variety in their overall education is important and should not be limited during jazz ensembles either; the practice of music making is not distinct from their desire to encounter variety in their college experiences. The opportunity to find musical influence in multiple places was also a primary motivation for learning jazz. A jazz educator is in a unique position, who creates an environment that recognizes that desire

and endeavors to find a place for it in the jazz ensemble setting. The students can be turned off from jazz learning when the stakes are pushed beyond the acceptable boundaries they are comfortable with. Instead, they should be encouraged to explore ways to be creative and expressive in the ensembles. The educator is then in action more as a facilitator of the community of jazz learners rather than a driver of prescribed curriculum and high-performance expectations.

The educator will also find more success in this environment by actively engaging their students by demonstrating their own passion for the music and addressing the unique influences on students. The modeling of their learning and practice of jazz serves to inspire the students when it is presented as example without associated expectations for students to follow the same model of practice and jazz involvement. Educators should understand that the students they serve have a vastly different set of motivations than the instructors had at the same age and should not impose new paradigms that run in conflict to the desires of the students.

At the completion of this study, I found there are some clear ways in which the research generated from the study can be directly applied by educators in this unique environment. Considering the study sought to uncover areas of motivation, pedagogical practices should be developed with a specific awareness of the needs of the population being served. These practices range from a motivational understanding to specific elements to implement in a program. Here are five of those practices an educator can apply based on the research of this study.

1. The simple understanding that most of the students are remaining active in jazz purely for social reasons. Therefore, creating an environment that

allows for a fun and social atmosphere will speak to this motivation within the students. A pressurized, performance-oriented program will not aid in this area of motivation often found in these learners.

2. Students enjoying the learning aspect of jazz can find themselves in a state of flow during rehearsals. One aspect of flow is immediate and constructive feedback. Feedback and evaluation of performance in this context should not be related to grades or other academic norms, rather based on the performance efforts given by the students to maximize their learning experiences.
3. All the students expressed in several ways the need to be able to express themselves creatively, often through original composition or arrangement. In choosing material for the students it will be helpful to allow significant space for students to make and experiment with these compositional contributions.
4. The students appeared to thrive on having the regularity of rehearsals and the venue to play music and express themselves in musical forms. Providing students with a clear structure to the program or learning atmosphere will allow for the students to focus on their specific efforts in progressing their musical skills or adding their creative contributions to the space afforded them.
5. The students found the greatest sense of external motivators from their peers. The competition manifested in the form of support for peer effort rather than any kind of winning outcome. Educators will activate a

collective group motivation at times when space is given for students to, in a sense, emerge as leaders of an ensemble based on their skills or regular contributions to the group.

6. The educator in these learning communities is an active participant playing and working with the student groups. The students see the teacher as an inspiration and ally in the process of learning jazz. The students will feel a greater sense of engagement in the material and goals of the group when the educator makes an equal demonstrated investment in the process, which is best seen when they are participating with the students.

**Future Research**

This study sought to uncover what motivates and engages students who seek to learn jazz in an avocational capacity – students who elect to learn and perform jazz in an environment that would not likely be considered a pre-professional program. While understanding these attitudes as crucial to pedagogical development, the study did not aim to address particular methods for educators. Future research could build on these student attitudes to uncover specific methods that educators can enact to best serve this population of jazz student, which is not limited to liberal arts colleges. Furthermore, assessing such methods should be accompanied with learning about what would qualify as successful teaching in this area. Addressing these areas, the avocational teaching successes and methods seen here, would complement this current study of addressing what motivates and engages avocational jazz students to pursue these learning environments.

Several key areas of future research aimed at better serving the community of avocational jazz learners could include the following:

1. Is there repertoire, period, or other considerations in terms of repertoire that align with best ways to engage avocational learners? What criteria would be in place to select repertoire appropriate to this community that engaged them with the material while motivating them to progress as players?
2. Are there specific elements to an overall jazz program that the jazz educator can implement to maximize motivation and commitment from the students in their ensembles and jazz classes? A study to uncover what a robust avocational jazz performance program would look like would complement the research generated here, research that was originally intended to investigate the underlying motivations and motivating factors at work in an avocational jazz environment.
3. What forms of assessment are appropriate for these programs? This study found that formal academic grades were not a motivating factor for students to continue or give effort to learning jazz. Therefore, what assessment tools would be appropriate in measuring the progressing being made?
4. Most of the students recalled that jazz was not at all, or at minimum a small, consideration in the choice of college. Many of the students were pleasantly surprised that there existed a possibility to continue with jazz despite being drawn to the institution for other reasons. From the

standpoint of the university, would the promotion of a “avocational” jazz program be a beneficial tool in recruiting students to liberal arts colleges? How can an institution promote a program that is designed to support avocational learners with no future professional expectations?

5. The students reported the need to be expressive in college experiences, and the teachers reported their need to engage the students in critical thinking. Where do these goals overlap, and how can they be complementary in jazz program design? Are there ways in which a program can be designed to engage other academic fields within their institutions to enrich the process of learning jazz for these music students?

As the field of jazz education continues to expand, the inclusion of pedagogies directed to avocational learners will benefit students and educators alike. As this study demonstrated, students hold a special set of motivations for the continued pursuit of jazz performance in an avocational sense, while educators reported their need to engage with these students in a way seemingly different than the ways in which they were taught music as aspiring professional performers. I hope this study represents a positive step forward in identifying and constructing effective pedagogies to benefit the jazz community and the unique learners making up the avocational population of jazz performers.

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# Appendix A

## Informed Consent Form – Student

Teachers College, Columbia University

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study on the aspects of motivation and engagement for jazz studies students in liberal arts colleges. There is little research that investigates what are the primary factors motivating students to continue in jazz programs when their academic and future career goals are not music based.

You will participation will consist of group interview regarding your insights into this area of jazz education. You will be asked a series of questions about you as a member of this unique population of students. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. All participants will remain completely anonymous throughout all written forms and the interview transcriptions and/or recordings will not be distributed in any form.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There is no direct risk to the participants involved in these interviews. Benefits resulting from this study will be an increase of the amount of data available regarding this area of jazz education, particularly relating to the perspective of the students. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Interview subjects have the option to respond or not respond to questions as is dictated by their personal comfort. Participants have the right to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without explanation or negative consequences. All participants will have access to the final product of this study.

PAYMENTS: You will receive no payment for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All recordings, transcripts and records resulting from this study will remain confidential and will in no way be distributed. Every effort will be made to ensure that the identity of each participant remains confidential. No names or otherwise identifying information will be included in the report of this study. All participants will be referred to by pseudonym in the presentation of all resulting documentation.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation in interview will be approximately 60 to 90 minutes scheduled at a mutually convenient time between the researcher and the participants.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study will be used as part of the researcher's doctoral dissertation, published in journals and/or articles, and for other possible educational purposes.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded (no video).
I am willing to have this interview audio recorded:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Matt Buttermann, at 928.713.5010 or mgb2161@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form – Teacher

**Protocol Title**: Motivating and Engaging the Avocational Jazz Learner
**Principal Investigator**: Matt Buttermann

**INTRODUCTION**

You are being invited to participate in this research study called "Motivating and Engaging the Avocational Jazz Learner." You may qualify to take part in this research study because of your work with jazz students in the liberal arts environment**.** Approximately six people will participate in this study and it will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time to complete.

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

This study is being done to determine what are the primary motivational factors for music students participating in jazz ensembles and classes in higher education, specifically the liberal arts environment. The population in liberal arts colleges is intended to represent the student who is not pursuing a music performance degree, however, remain highly active in music performance opportunities and classes offered at the school. This study is designed to better understand the motivational factors and elements of engagement that contribute most to their experiences in this area of jazz education.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by the principal investigator. During the interview you will be asked to discuss your work with music students in the liberal arts environment**.** This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recording is written down the audio-recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes. You will be given a pseudonym or de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

**WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of teacher education to better understand the best way to engage and motivate avocational jazz students.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**
You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

**WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**
The study is over when you have completed the interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**
The investigator will keep all written materials privately secured throughout the study. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. Data collected on the audio recording will be transcribed and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

**HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?**
The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

**CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING**
Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded _____
Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded _____
Signature

**WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY**

___I consent to allow written materials to be viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College

_____
Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written materials to be viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University

_____
Signature

**OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT**

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes _____ No_____
Initial Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes _____ No_____
Initial Initial

**WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Matt Buttermann, at 928-713-5010 or at mbuttermann@fordham.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS**

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

# Appendix C

## Initial Email Inquiry – Teacher

Dear XXXX

My name is Matt Buttermann and I am a jazz musician and teacher in the New York City area. I am currently the manager of Youth Programs at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Director of Jazz Performance at Fordham University, and reaching out to you today specifically as a doctoral candidate in Music and Music Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

I am developing a project for my dissertation on investigating engagement and motivational constructs of students learning jazz in liberal arts colleges. I am very interested in learning how this environment is served in liberal arts institutions in hopes of better understanding the specific needs of this unique population of students.

I have concluded that the best method of inquiry for this project is to interview jazz teachers and students at liberal arts colleges in the area. I would like to interview a few teachers one-on-one along with 4-6 students in a focus group format at the same institutions to discuss aspects of motivation and engagement prevalent in their respective programs.

I would be grateful if you and a few of your students could participate in this study. It would mean me visiting your school one day in the spring 2017 semester to conduct the interviews – approximately 60 minutes with you and about 60-90 minutes with the student focus group. If you are interested and think this would be possible to arrange I can send you more detailed and formal information, or I'm happy to give you a call to chat over the phone if that is easier.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,
Matt Buttermann

# Appendix D

## Teacher Interview Protocol

Table 2

*Interview – Teacher Protocol*

| Themes | Questions |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The purpose of this project is to examine the motivational and engagement aspects of a jazz program in the liberal arts environment. Do you have any questions before we start? |
| **Background** | How did you get started in this field of jazz education?<br>- How many years have you been teaching?<br>- How long at the current institution?<br>- Did you start this program, or was established before you arrived?<br><br>Can you describe how your program developed the way it has?<br><br>As a teacher, did you intend to focus your efforts on performance majors or the liberal arts style education?<br><br>How would you compare this population of students to pre-professional performance majors? |
| **Expectations** | What are your expectations for student success?<br>- How do you express and manage those expectations with the students?<br><br>How would you describe your students as a population in general?<br><br>What do you expect/hope the students will be doing with jazz after they graduate? |
| **Motivation** | Do you have specific tools or methods you use to motivate your students?<br><br>What is least motivating to them? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | What have you found to be the most significant motivating factors for your students? |
| **Engagement** | How do you engage these students during classes/rehearsals/lessons? |
| **Assessment** | Can you describe what constitutes successful learning in this area?<br>- What effect do grades have on these students?<br><br>How do you determine if students are achieving success? |
| **Experience** | What would you say is the most rewarding experience for your students in this program?<br>- Least rewarding?<br><br>Can you tell me about what you find to be differences in experience for performance versus rehearsal with your students? |
| **Teacher Role** | What challenges do you face as a teacher for this population of jazz learners?<br><br>What obstacles do you see the students facing as members of your program?<br><br>What do you perceive as the teacher's role in this environment? |
| **Program** | What are the factors guiding your curricular decisions for the program?<br><br>How would you describe the students who enter your program as freshmen?<br><br>In what ways is your program similar to that of performance-based programs? |
| **General** | Is there anything else you would like to add? |

# Appendix E

## Student Focus Group Protocol

Table 3

*Student Focus Group Protocol*

| Themes | Questions |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The purpose of this project is to examine the motivational and engagement aspects of a jazz program in the liberal arts environment. Do you have any questions before we start? |
| **Background** | What is your experience with jazz music prior to entering college?<br>- Did you play in your high school jazz band?<br><br>Did you consider attending a performance program for college?<br><br>Did you ever want to be a professional musician?<br><br>What is your academic major?<br><br>How would you compare the population of students in your jazz program to those who are performance majors? |
| **Expectations** | Why did you choose to come to this college?<br>- Was jazz, or music in general, a factor in your decision to attend this college?<br><br>Can you describe your expectations for this program?<br>- Have those expectations been met? Why or why not?<br><br>Have you made plans for what you want to do after graduation?<br>- What role does your involvement in jazz have to do with your long term career and/or personal life goals? |
| **Motivation** | What motivates you to be a jazz musician?<br><br>What motivated/motivates you to continue learning in the program here at the college? |

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| | Can you describe your commitment level to jazz music as it relates to other areas of your academic or personal life?<br><br>What do you find most, and least, motivating about your experiences learning jazz here? |
| **Engagement** | When are you most engaged during classes/rehearsals? |
| **Assessment** | How would you describe your own success in the program?<br><br>How do you know if you have been successful or not? |
| **Experience** | Can you tell me what is the most rewarding experience, or experiences) for you as part of this program? |
| **Teacher** | What is the teacher's role in this learning environment?<br><br>Can you describe your relationship with the jazz instructor in your program?<br>- What effect does the teacher's relationship with the students have on the success? |
| **Program** | What elements of the program do you find most important to you?<br>- How do these elements relate to maintaining motivation and ongoing engagement?<br><br>Can you describe the importance of jazz education to you? Why or why not important?<br><br>How would you describe the students in the jazz program?<br><br>What would you like to see different in your program? |
| **General** | Is there anything else that you would like to add? |